

2002

Subversive aspects of American musical theatre

Donald Elgan Whittaker III

Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, dwhitt2@lsu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_dissertations



Part of the [Theatre and Performance Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Whittaker III, Donald Elgan, "Subversive aspects of American musical theatre" (2002). *LSU Doctoral Dissertations*. 1125.
https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_dissertations/1125

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at LSU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in LSU Doctoral Dissertations by an authorized graduate school editor of LSU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact gradetd@lsu.edu.

SUBVERSIVE ASPECTS OF
AMERICAN MUSICAL THEATRE

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Theatre

by

Donald Elgan Whittaker III
B.A., Rice University, 1991
M.A., Florida State University, 1996
May 2002

To my mother and father, who taught me.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

No enterprise is ever undertaken in a vacuum, and this work is no exception. There is no way to thank everyone who has aided in the completion of this dissertation, but I wish to note particularly the contributions of the following people.

To my family, Don and Jane Whittaker, the Ritters, Tanna and Howard Ritter, I offer my deepest thanks and love. I could no more have done this without your love and support than I could fly. I wish to thank Sally Barbay for showing me, at a very young age, what heights theatre could scale. I would particularly like to take this opportunity to thank my niece, Hannah Shea Ritter, for the great joy she has brought, in just the few short weeks I have known her. I would like to extend my appreciation of the group of friends at LSU who have acted as surrogate family and who have kept me (relatively) sane and who listened to the many dissertation tales of woe: Wendell Stone, Mark Zelinsky, Hamilton Armstrong, John Wright, Rachel Harris, and Tim Kennedy.

Two groups in Houston also deserve recognition. To Robin McElfresh, I owe more than I can ever express. To the rest of the “Disgruntled Liberals” (Marla McDaniel, Tom and Becky Wocken, and John and Christine Kovach), I give my thanks for the constant stream of e-mails and encouragements that never ceased. The West Main group did the same thing, in addition to providing me a space to lick my wounds on occasion: Thank you to Rick Smith, Tom Meade and David Cleveland.

The music faculty at LSU gave me a great deal of support and encouragement, but I must particularly name Lynn Jemison-Keisker, who not only always found time to help with questions, but gave of herself unsparingly. Jan Summers and Cheri Weber, who run the Theatre Department Office, cannot ever comprehend the meaning of their smiles and

help during their time here. To the current and former faculty of the LSU theatre department who have given me so much—Lesley Ferris, Bill Harbin, Les Wade, Femi Euba, Leigh Clemons, and Michael Tick—I give my respect and gratitude, both of which are boundless.

I also wish to thank John Degen at Florida State University for teaching me that others thought of musical theater with respect; he also provided a detailed synopsis of the original libretto of *Irene* from a trip to New York. Along those lines, I wish to thank Ellwood Anaheim at Catholic University in Washington, DC, for sending me a copy of the proposed 1949 revision of that same musical. To both the creators of the musicals examined in this volume, as well as those everywhere, I extend thanks from my very soul for an art form that has brought me joy and bliss since early childhood.

Above all, I wish to thank Jennifer Jones, who chaired this project. She never failed to show excitement and patience during the process, and her patience and insight have taught me more than I can ever repay. She sets a dazzling example of what it is to be both teacher and mentor—demanding rigorous scholarship yet remaining supportive and encouraging at all times. I can only hope to extend to my own students a small portion of what Dr. Jones has given to me.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	vi
ABSTRACT	ix
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. “WHATEVER HAPPENED TO CLASS” IN THE AMERICAN MUSICAL? ..	15
“Feeling aisy in high society:” The Gilded Age and the Four Hundred	21
“Oh, who has not heard of the four?:” <i>Reilly and the 400</i>	24
“When you walk through a storm:” <i>Carousel’s</i> America	40
“Millwork ain’t easy:” <i>Carousel</i>	42
<i>I Can Get It For You Wholesale</i> : Class Concerns Continue	62
“I Can See So Far:” <i>Floyd Collins</i> and the Underclass	64
Conclusion	83
III: “I KNOW WE ARE YOUR CHOSEN PEOPLE. BUT ONCE IN A WHILE, COULDN’T YOU CHOOOSE SOMEONE ELSE?:” JEWS ON THE AMERICAN MUSICAL STAGE	86
Immigration and Antisemitism Before 1888	90
“I Can’t Take It All When I Die:” Toward a Sympathetic Shylock	92
“I Am Easily Assimilated:” Musical Jews and Antisemitism During the Early 1900s	101
The Farmer and the Cowhand (and the Merchant): Antisemitism and Community in <i>Oklahoma!</i>	104
“What Would You Do?:” <i>Cabaret</i> and 1960s America	112
“If You Could See Her Through My Eyes:” <i>Cabaret</i> and the Other	114
“This is Not Over Yet:” <i>Parade</i>	128
Conclusion	145
IV: “WE ARE A FAMILY”	149
The American Family Before the Twentieth Century	154
The American Family After 1900: Setting the Stage for <i>Babes In Arms</i>	155
“Youth Will Arrive:” <i>Babes In Arms</i> and the Extended Family	157
Women and Family in the Mid-Twentieth Century	168
“The Middleaged Bully and the Girl of Eighteen”	169
Contemporary Marriage and Family	185
“Making a Home:” William Finn’s “Marvin Songs”	186
“Hey Kids, Let’s Put on a Show!” The Meta-Theatrical Musical Family	203
Conclusion	204

V: “WE’VE HAD PLENTY HEIDY-HO:” SEX IN THE AMERICAN	
MUSICAL	207
Sexuality in the Early Twentieth Century	211
“Fun For Everybody:” <i>Leave It To Me!</i> and the Sexuality of Politics	213
The Sexual Politics of World War II	228
“Get a Load of Honey Bun Tonight:” <i>South Pacific</i> and the Gaze	230
Is it Real or is it Cybersex?: Sex in the 1990s	247
“Beauty is Power, Longing a Disease:” Upsetting the Gaze in <i>Passion</i>	248
“Their Things Were Out:” Conclusion	261
VI: “QUEER TWISTS:” HOMOSEXUALITY ON THE AMERICAN	
MUSICAL STAGE	264
“Thy Words Are Queer, Sir”	267
Gays and Lesbians in the Early Twentieth Century	269
“Why didn’t you tell me Madame Lucy is a Man?:” <i>Irene’s</i> Open Closet	270
Homosexuality in the 1930s and 1940s	283
<i>Lady in the Dark</i> : “I Have No Queer Twists”	285
“It’s Time to Open Up Your Closet:” Musical Gay Characters in the 1970s and Beyond	299
“Shut Up, You Big Dyke!:)” The (Nearly) Invisible Lesbian on the Musical Stage	302
Post-gay	305
The Post-gay World of <i>A New Brain</i>	306
VII: CONCLUSION	315
WORKS CITED	321
APPENDIX: SELECTED SONG LYRICS	339
VITA	346

LIST OF FIGURES

2.1: “I’ve Come Home To Stay”	33
2.2: “Prologue (The Carousel Waltz)”	44
2.3: “When The Children Are Asleep,” Enoch’s Introduction	52
2.4: “When The Children Are Asleep,” Enoch’s Verse	53
2.5: “When The Children Are Asleep,” Carrie’s Verse	53
2.6: “When The Children Are Asleep,” Enoch and Carrie’s Duet	54
2.7: Circular Motive	61
2.8: “Is That Remarkable?” Rhythmic Description	70
3.1: <i>Cabaret</i> Figure	126
3.2: Opening Chords from “Willkommen”	127
3.3: Opening bars of “What Am I Waiting For?”	135
3.4: Opening bars of “All the Wasted Time”	142
3.5: Accompanimental rhythm of “The Old Red Hills of Home”	143
3.6: Accompanimental rhythm of “A Rumblin’ and a Rollin’.”	143
4.1: “I’ve Grown Accustomed to Her Face”	182
4.2: Final bars of vocal line, “I’ve Grown Accustomed to Her Face”	182
4.3: “Wouldn’t It Be Lovely?”	183
4.4: “Why Can’t The English?”	184
4.5: “I’ve Grown Accustomed to Her Face,” Melodic Contours	184
5.1: First Verse of “My Heart Belongs to Daddy”	220
5.2: Bridge of “My Heart Belongs to Daddy”	221
5.3: First lines of “Most Gentlemen Don’t Like Love”	225

5.4: Second half of Introduction to “Most Gentlemen Don’t Like Love”	226
5.5: Melodic shape of “Get Out of Town”	227
5.6: Opening verse of “There Is Nothin’ Like A Dame”	234
5.7: “Cable Hears Bali Ha’i”	237
5.8: “Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin’”	238
5.9: “Bali Ha’i” figure	238
5.10: “Here am I, your special island!”	239
5.11: First lines of “Some Enchanted Evening”	244
5.12: “‘Chopinesque’ Theme”	256
5.13: “No One Has Ever Loved Me”	256

ABSTRACT

Critical discourse regarding musical theatre takes, for the most part, the form of a profound silence, due presumably to a dismissal of the genre as simplistic and insubstantial. Not only have the elements of musical theatre been present in the majority of theatrical history, but many of the greatest theories regarding theatre have included these elements, including Brecht and Wagner. Musicals have also often concerned themselves with the Other, centering and sympathizing him/her in a manner unavailable to non-musical works. The Others that have thus been positioned are often delineated from hegemonic groups which are concretely those in power, but which are difficult to define. While officially, America is a classless society, class distinctions make a difference, and musicals have long championed the underdogs, both financial and social. Many “non-white” ethnic groups have been subordinated in American society but centered within musical theatre. While the musical stage has often established the idea of Jewishness as pertaining to ethnicity, it has also elevated Jews to leading characters, often while simultaneously serving to place audiences in the position of having to confront their own antisemitism. While heteronormativity is certainly the hegemonic stance regarding sexuality in America, the musical has often subverted it, whether through setting up alternative family structures, weakening male primacy within sexual contact, or setting up queer characters as sympathetic and leading characters. This dissertation explores all the above subaltern groups, examining how many creators of musicals have placed characters from these congregations at or near the forefront of sympathy and primacy, with particular attention given to how music aids in this positioning.

“Even Brecht wrote musicals.”
Paul Rudnick, *Jeffrey*

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This study explores selected musicals written in America during the twentieth century that feature serious issues, attacking the hegemonic structures behind such monolithic problems as prejudice, sexism, antisemitism, and sexuality, and heteronormativity; a discussion of historical and contemporary hegemonies will be outlined in order to examine the particular subversions. For subversion to exist, there must also exist a hegemonic structure that *can* be subverted. The forms explored in this work are: class structure; the idea of the nuclear family as the highest example of community; the concept of romantic love becoming physical only upon legal marriage; heteronormativity; and white Christian authority within belief structures. The chapters are designed to explore these specific issues; therefore, this dissertation does not attempt to include all musicals that have concerned themselves with queer characters (for example), nor is it intended to be a complete study of all American musicals. It is, instead, calculated to show that musical theatre has long been far more subversive, serious, and valuable as theatre than it is usually given credit for being, and that it can sometimes contribute more to theoretical conversations, particularly through the addition of music, than any non-musical could ever hope to do. Each chapter will concentrate on three musicals: one from the so-called “Golden Era,” as well as one prior to and one after that era.¹ I am not suggesting in the least that there have been no changes in style over the history of the American musical, nor am I suggesting that hegemonic normativity has remained static throughout this period. However, there has been a continued trend of

¹ The Golden Era of musicals is popularly considered to begin with the premiere of *Oklahoma!* in 1943, and to end sometime in the late 1960s or early 1970s.

subversion, and it is this upon which I will focus.

Given the rise of musical theatre during the same era that firmly established naturalism and realism as the normative theatrical traditions, this particular subversion cannot be discounted. While various twentieth-century theatrical and literary movements eventually rose to counteract realism, musical theatre led the way, and has embraced most of them as they have appeared. These movements have ranged from Brechtian devices (*The Threepenny Opera* has had at least three major film versions released) to absurdism (in such works as *Promenade* and *The Last Sweet Days of Isaac*). Stephen Sondheim's works have been labeled postmodern by scholars, and are often presented in fragmentary, non-linear form. Finally, performance artists such as Laurie Anderson have crossed the musical/non-musical boundary with their performances.

Music, song, and dance have been part of theatre from its recorded beginnings: music was an integral part of Greek tragedy; medieval liturgical dramas were sung; playwrights from Shakespeare to Brecht have included both song and dance in their plays; and Wagner's influential theories of a *gesamtkunstwerk* are still taught in academic settings. Eastern theatre has regularly utilized music, as well: Noh and Kabuki both employ onstage musicians to accompany the actors, who dance and sing. And yet there has been a great historical and theoretical silence regarding musical theatre, with overt disparagement not unknown. There is little mention made of the genre in most general history books. Oscar Brockett devotes approximately one page of text in his *History of the Theatre* to discussion of musical theater; this is a notable omission in view of his devoting at least that much of the volume to listing seventeenth-century French acting companies by name. In his discussion of American directors and actors, none of prominence in musical theatre is even mentioned. All this despite the fact that the genre has lasted longer than many other forms of theatre, and that it is commonly considered to be the one truly American contribution to world theatre.

Much of the theoretical dismissal of musical theatre takes the form of a profound

silence. For example, during the first eleven years of *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism*, only one article is dedicated to the subject. That one, Jeffrey Smart's examination of labels in the musical *Falsettos*, works exclusively with the production's libretto, ignoring any contributions the music might make. In considering an opera, another form of music drama more commonly considered high art, this omission would be unthinkable.

One probable reason for the neglect of the field is that it is often critically dismissed as "light entertainment," depending on "colour and spectacle" (World Theatre, 1971). As early as 1893, critics were suspicious of the then-new art form. That year's *Gaiety Girl* was the first production to actually characterize itself as a "musical comedy;" Sheridan Morley cites one unnamed critic who characterized the piece as "one of the most curious examples of composite architecture we have for some time seen" (Morley 88). Even Brooks Atkinson, the esteemed drama critic for the *New York Times* who admittedly loved musical theatre, wrote in 1947 that "what a theatre critic probably wants is a musical show with songs that evoke the emotion of situations and make no further pretensions" (Atkinson 36). Atkinson continued to preach against serious musical theatre explorations of the human conditions, preferring instead a lighter entertainment. Eric Bentley included the libretto of *Guys and Dolls* in his 1956 anthology *From the American Drama*, evidently believing that it was an exception to his maxim that "most musical comedies would not make good reading" (215).

Why this silence and/or disparagement of a theatre form that has lasted nearly 150 years, and which continues to attract audiences and creators in large numbers? I believe there are many reasons. The first is that musical theatre is often viewed as "light entertainment," as mentioned above, fit for catchy songs and tap dance, but not for saying much of interest about the human condition. The fact that its beginnings, with *The Black Crook* (1866), are usually considered to be accidental—rather than deliberate—does not

help.² Nor, very likely, do its beginnings as “musical comedy” help in gaining critical respect, it being a rare comedy that is perceived as important enough to teach in academic settings; tragedy has been considered the *ne plus ultra* of drama since the days of Aristotle. Also, as I shall discuss in later chapters, the genre’s mixture of music and theatre is disconcerting to those who prefer their theatre “pure.”

As early as 1899, Norman Hapgood was distinguishing between popular art and “legitimate” theatre; this collision between high and low had come about, Hapgood believed, because the lower classes could now read and were suddenly refusing to take cues from their educated “betters.” During the 1950s, writers such as Dwight Macdonald defined high culture and lowbrow culture and believed passionately that never the twain would (or should) meet, for any such meeting simply contaminated and downgraded the high culture. This urge toward high art is what Lawrence W. Levine refers to as the “sacralization” of culture. Sacralization has continually reinforced a marked deference toward European art, and the idea that art and culture are the “sacred, unique products of the rare individual spirit” (161), culminating in a dismissal of all things popular. The trend has continued with such recent works as Allan Bloom’s *The Closing of the American Mind* (1987), with Bloom’s unequivocal “there is no relation between popular culture and high culture” (322).

“Midcult” obviously appalled Macdonald; his essay forever heightened the term’s pejorative connotations. Many of the contemporary authors who write on middlebrow as a topic spend much of their time proving how much cleverer they are than the practitioners of middlebrow culture, to say nothing of its consumers (see Louis Rubin and Mark Steyn, who also seem to believe that “middlebrow” now means “lowbrow”). This intensifies the idea that middlebrow might be far more about class structure than about

²There is no doubt that even without the fiery destruction of a theatre, resulting in this famous combination of two shows, musical theatre would have come into being: European comic opera and operetta were wildly popular in America at the turn of the 20th century.

artistic pretension(s). In Joan Rubin's *The Making of Middlebrow Culture*, she discusses the idea that people can *learn* culture and the "paradox at the heart of the learning experience: that people in search of self-reliance could attain it only by becoming dependent on a superior authority outside themselves" (14). These critics' continual "insistence on 'standards,' on the importance of training, and on distinguishing true from false culture appears designed to stave off theatres to their own power" (26). This idea also plays into the idea of class as a consumable; if one attends only the theatre that is spelled out by the "experts," one can develop intelligence and highbrow "culture." Still, definitions of highbrow and lowbrow reposition over time. Levine and Rubin both acknowledge that these critics—especially in the early days of the twentieth century—were strong believers in democratic ideals and simply wanted to be of service; but it appears as if they desired this service to arrive from a vantage point higher than that of those receiving the knowledge. The same stance still holds: academic critics want to teach and facilitate knowledge, but will point to such shows as *Cats* or *Grease* as betrayals of theatrical and cultural validity, never looking beyond them to works which demand much more of their audiences.

Mark Steyn declares that "the standard criticism of the middlebrow is that it gives you the intimation of great art but also the illusion that great art is easy" (Steyn, "Middlebrow," 39). Whether he means easy in performance or easy in creation, he does not say. Nevertheless, in neither case would it apply to such musicals as *Floyd Collins*, a piece requiring highly trained singers and an audience educated in more contemporary, "serious" music. Steyn sums up his feelings with the comment that "the best thing about middlebrow art is its ability to seize something complex and mysterious and identify something grippingly human about it" (40). This comment is simply incredible. How can we explain the continued stage life of authors ranging from Sophocles through Shakespeare and beyond, if not through this ability to identify the "human" within the larger questions posed by them? And yet these playwrights are the higher echelons of

the canon and considered high art.

The fact that musical theatre has historically utilized popular music has kept it from being taken seriously by many critics: popular music has been denied a place in most cultural canons. Even more importantly, however, popularity seems to aid greatly in the critical and theoretical dismissal of musical theatre. “Popularity” is not necessarily even financial success, although the two are often linked. Macdonald’s definition will work perfectly well: in discussing a publicly popular author, he says “he is marketing a standard product, like Kleenex, that precisely because it is not related to any individual needs on the part of either the producer or the consumer appeals to the widest possible audience” (206). Of course, the Greeks and Shakespeare were popular in their day; does it necessarily follow that popularity and lowbrow are inextricably embroiled?

As Geoffrey Block puts it: “A subtext of the ensuing discussion is that selling tickets does not necessarily mean selling out artistic integrity” (*Evenings* 5); in other words, “popular” does not mean valueless. As much as Joseph Kerman has said of value in discussing music’s dramatic uses in sung theatre, he too seems unhappy with success: “Popular art has other channels. One of them is musical comedy. . . . [I]n over a hundred years operetta and musical comedy have not come forth with not a single serious dramatist” (269).

There are the occasional references to what Geoffrey Block calls the “canonic” musicals in theatre history classes.³ The simple emergence of such a canon gives these works at least a modest credence in high culture circles. However, despite the grudging acceptance of some works (mostly by classically trained or classically ambitious composers), “with few exceptions the genre itself remains outside the mainstream of American music history” (Block “Canon” 529).

³ Block’s list of twelve includes: *Show Boat* (1927), *Porgy and Bess* (1935), *Pal Joey* (1940), *Oklahoma!* (1943), *Carousel* (1945), *Kiss Me, Kate* (1948), *South Pacific* (1949), *Guys and Dolls* (1950), *The King and I* (1951), *My Fair Lady* (1956), *The Most Happy Fella* (1956), *West Side Story* (1957). I am not sure I agree with this entire list, but I cannot completely disagree, either.

Musical theatre's debts to minstrelsy and vaudeville are another contribution to academic dislike; even in straightforward historical studies of musical theatre, these two are often slighted. Both began as entertainment aimed at lower-class audiences (and performers); vaudeville eventually managed to overcome this, to a certain extent. In fact, as theatre owners inclined toward high culture in their evenings' bills, the entertainers themselves united against the move; vaudeville was obviously never intended as high culture, despite its eventual mixture of highbrow and lowbrow. M. Alison Kibler maintains that the entire history of vaudeville "clearly reveals mass culture's varied approaches to cultural hierarchy: it uplifted low culture and unraveled high culture; it aspired to bourgeois standardization but did not neglect working-class, immigrant pride" (11). Macdonald has a less positive take on the same idea—that any mixture of high and low culture simply results in a diminishment of the higher culture.

Minstrelsy never achieved vaudeville's endeavor to move beyond its primary appeal to blue-collar audiences, and even in its heyday, newspaper critics decried the minstrel audiences with "distaste" (Cockrell 161). Instead of mixing high and low culture, minstrel shows tended to "constantly deflate the 'highbrow' and thus affirm[ed] the image of the common man" (Engle xxviii). It is difficult for contemporary sensibilities to find anything but embarrassment at the racism so implicit in minstrel shows; some modern theorists (Cockrell, Mahar) attempt to look at minstrelsy despite the overwhelming stereotyping and racism, but both admit that this is difficult; Engle finally calls the entire genre "a monstrous and prolonged racial joke" (xxvi). Nonetheless, when looking at the shows, it becomes obvious that they "appealed to average Americans, primarily working-class men, by attacking women's rights, ridiculing the temperance movement, and making fun of a wide variety of intellectuals, experts, and authority figures. Even the most marginal white patrons could place themselves above the black characters presented by white actors in blackface" (Kibler 8). Again, it seems as if class structure and the positioning of the canon enter once again into the placement of at least

this portion of musical comedy history.

It seems odd that many of the greatest philosophers and theoreticians have explored the importance of many of the ideas embodied by musical theatre, and while their ideas are revered, the field itself is often dismissed. Nietzsche believed that music can illuminate a story in directions unrecognizable in non-musical terms, infusing any dramatic scene with a deeper significance than is possible without music. This music discloses to an audience the situation's "most secret meaning and appears as the most accurate and distinct comment upon it" (445). Richard Wagner, heavily influenced by Nietzsche, put forth his theory of *gesamtkunstwerk*, a "complete art work" which includes all the arts, unified into one presentation. This idea is considered by many to be a turning point in Western theatre theory and training, yet is almost completely ignored when it comes to the idea of the American musical comedy (though the elements are the same). Bertolt Brecht, one of the most influential of all theatre theorists, believed strongly in the power behind music to inform and illustrate theatrical moments and ideas.

I believe that a great many dismissals of musical theatre stem from the lack of musical training on the part of theatre scholars and the lack of theatre training on the part of musicians. Those few who discuss the impact that music can have on drama, such as Joseph Kerman, primarily deal with opera, evincing the same dislike of the popular, low, and American art of the musical as those scholars who do not understand the genre's duality. However, Kerman discusses opera in terms often suitable for musical theatre. For example, in either opera or musical theatre, music can contribute a great deal to the onstage drama by "defining character, generating action, and establishing atmosphere" (14). He articulates another belief that holds quite as true for American musical theatre when he discusses the "seeming contradiction between ideals and corrupt practice. . . . [A]rtistic values are thoroughly confused by the jumble of good and bad that forms our current repertory. This makes a serious consideration of operas both difficult and rare" (4). The same is true of musical theatre, despite the occasional show whose existence is,

indeed, focused on light-hearted song and dance.

So why study musical theatre as anything other than popular culture? Jill Dolan, a contemporary theatre theorist, argues in “In Defense of the Discourse” that theatre scholars need to analyze dramatic discourse not as a “mimetic function for the culture,” but as a producer of cultural meaning (Dolan 88). In other words, theatre is not merely a reflection and copy of life, but also reflects social trends and influences. I believe that the two work together: theatre can only produce cultural meaning within a framework consequential for its viewers. Conversely, it will primarily reflect those trends that are meaningful for the audience, abandoning those which are not. What this means in the framework of this dissertation is that ideologies must be accepted by enough people to make a subversion possible; otherwise, subversion is merely irritation, or even support. The chapters herein explore the subversion of the white, Christian male heteronormative structure.

Chapter two will deal with the subversion of class structure evidenced in *Reilly and the 400* (sic), *Carousel*, and *Floyd Collins*. America is a capitalistic society which prioritizes money, and which has built a class structure based upon wealth and access to education. Musicals repeatedly put forward lower economic class characters as their heroes, with the upper classes regularly appearing as pretentious snobs with little sense of their own humanity (or that of others). These musicals reveal the lower-class Other as having a soul, as well as often having more humanity than the upper classes, in works ranging from *Sally* (1920) to *Carousel*. This trend has continued to the present day: Adam Guettel’s eponymous hero in *Floyd Collins* is an impoverished caver; the arrogant big-city reporters who relate his story to their papers show surprise that the family actually wears shoes.

Music plays a primary role in this subversion. These lower-class characters are given songs of extraordinary depth and beauty that ennoble them far more than any dialogue ever could, in and of itself. In *Carousel*, Billy’s “Soliloquy” not only reveals

unexpected depths of love and tenderness to the audience, but does so in much the same musical approach as would any classical art song. Floyd Collins and his family are given music of exceptional beauty and sophistication, music that “never patronizes,” but instead constantly changes keys and meter in a manner “joyously, recklessly, madly, confidently, whoopingly free” (Guare n.p.). In fact, this music is stylistically indebted to that of such composers as Bartok and Copland.

The American musical has long dealt in one form or another with ethnic and racial subversion of the white male Christian norm. The early years of the last century saw African-Americans creating and performing their own works, and the recent popular musical *Ragtime* ends Act I with the question “What is wrong with this country?” with regard to matters of prejudice. Chapter three will consider the idea of ethnic/racial subversion of the white Christian hegemony of America, concentrating particularly on anti-Semitism and some of its major musical opponents, starting with *Mordecai Lyons* and *Oklahoma!*, but especially examining *Cabaret* and *Parade*. The first was extremely subversive theatre, engaging the audience’s sympathy for characters only later revealed as monstrous, and thus implicating the audience in that monstrousness. *Parade* discusses racial relations between African-Americans and white Americans within the context of anti-Semitism, again raising perhaps unanswerable questions regarding America’s minority interconnections. In both cases, the music is used ingeniously, allowing for extraordinarily emphatic statements. *Cabaret* employs music in various Brechtian fashions; along with jarring the audience with a song’s sound, *Cabaret* utilizes funny, sweet and attractive music to first engage, then horrify, the audience as the song continues; the final effect is made much stronger and its implications are much broader. *Parade* uses subtle musical cues to link various communities and people within the its story, allowing for a fuller exploration than might otherwise be possible.

Chapter four discusses the much-promoted idea that the nuclear family--one father, one mother, and children--is the best, most desirable, and indeed, the only family

unit, using *Babes in Arms*, *My Fair Lady*, and William Finn's "Marvin Musicals."

Despite America's current high divorce statistics, the "norm" is still presented as legally-sanctioned marriage, following courtship, with children coming only after the wedding. Musical theatre has a history of scrutinizing marriage and often criticizing the idea that "family" is found only in this tradition. In these musicals, families are frequently the result of conscious choice, rather than occurring as the result of biological accident. Musical after musical presents an intentionally formed small community that describes itself in familial terms: "When you're a Jet, . . . / You got brothers around."

Hegemonic ideas of family have, of course, changed throughout the era of musical theatre, but musicals have often explored non-traditional living arrangements as part of their subversive qualities. There exist a vast array of characters who find they cannot live without one another and yet cannot come together in a conventional, societally-sanctioned marriage; conversely, musicals have often portrayed characters who engage the audience's sympathy toward their eventual marriage, but who find that their own dramatic circumstances cannot allow it. In *Panama Hattie*, for instance, the title character is backed throughout the piece by a trio of sailors who show little to no interest in either marrying her or anyone else, yet who never seem to think of leaving their "family." Couples who, despite their audience's desires (and theatrical tradition), cannot achieve a traditional marriage are seen in musicals at least as early as 1924's *The Student Prince*, where it is left to the leads' grandchildren to make the marriage their forebears could not.

Chapter five looks at a very specific portion of the traditional movement from courtship to marriage. Religion and society have traditionally dictated against sexual relations outside the confines of heteronormative marriage. Courtship is usually intended to be non-physical, at least within certain parameters; sexual congress is sanctioned primarily within legal marriage. Musical theatre has subverted this norm, often concerning itself with sex in a manner calculated to undercut this apparent "progression"

from asexual courtship to marital procreation and undermining the primacy of males within heteronormative sexuality. I will examine this idea in *Leave It To Me!*, *South Pacific*, and *Passion*.

Musical theatre has contained a concentration upon the physicalities of characters through song and dance that is not always available to non-musical theatre. At its beginnings, part of the allure of musical theatre was the chance to gaze upon chorus girls' legs. During the 1960s and 70s, specifically sexual musicals came into being, featuring nudity and even simulated sexual discourse, all with little to no mention of heterosexual marriage (and sometimes with no mention of heterosexuality). Most musicals fall somewhere in between these two extremes; many have highlighted an adult recognition of sexual tendencies among human beings. It is in this area that music can at times be especially illustrative.⁴ From bluesy accompaniments connoting eroticism through more abstractly symbolic ideas, music can convey a wealth of ideas about a character's sexuality, with no overt verbal commentary ever needed.

The sixth chapter will explore another aspect of subversive sexuality: musicals have a strong history of undermining heterosexual normativity throughout their history. There have been (sometimes barely) coded queer characters such as Madame Lucy, a male couturier, in *Irene* (1915), Russell, the photographer in *Lady in the Dark* (1941), and Duane, Eve's hairdresser in *Applause* (1970); this chapter will scrutinize the former two, finishing with a look at William Finn's *A New Brain*. Not only are these characters definitely written as homosexual males, but unlike the large majority of their counterparts in non-musical theatre, the works end with these men still alive and well and happy, if not romantically paired. Musicals have also allowed a queer gaze to permeate them, with a much stronger emphasis on the singing/dancing male body than is usual for non-musical theatre.

⁴Just as the traditional theatrical storyline progression has been suggested to imply male sexual patterns, so too has that of traditional Western music.

More recently, camp musicals such as *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* and *Rachael Lily Rosenbloom* have allowed a queer sensibility to saturate entire musicals. Of course, specifically gay and lesbian characters have been written for the musical stage ever since the Stonewall Riots. Perhaps most recently, William Finn's *Falsettos* has included both gay males and lesbians as rounded characters, containing both positive and negative aspects. Revues such as *Naked Boys Singing*, a currently-running off-Broadway musical, not only explore queer male sexuality, but also the male body, bringing the queer male gaze into concrete and overt actuality.

Each of these works mentioned above has used popular musical styles to encapsulate its viewpoint, allowing composers and lyricists to remain in step with their era, as well as using contemporary materials to undermine audience expectation. It is this particular point that allows musicals a freedom of subversion beyond the ability of non-musicals, something I will examine in greater detail within the context of the chapters. Not only will audiences see a musical on subjects they would ordinarily avoid, but music has the ability to sneak in under their radar, to make an "end run" around their defenses and allow the presentation of ideas that would normally be disregarded. In the words of Joseph Kerman, a libretto supplies

the presentation of situations and conflicts, and [uses] words in their 'denotative' aspect. Around such references music is free to indulge its most subtle connotative, expressive powers, . . . [using] feelings, attitudes, and meanings 'beyond the nameable, classifiable emotions and motives of our conscious life' (in Eliot's words) (15)

Kerman also believes that "even the most passionate of speeches exists on a level of emotional reserve that music automatically passes. Music can be immediate and simple in the presentation of emotional states or shades" and allows listeners (and performers) to "give themselves over to sensibility" (12-13). These hold as true of musical theatre as they do for opera. Kate Clinton, the noted lesbian feminist comic, has said that "there is a window of vulnerability that opens up when people are laughing. They let down their

guard and new ideas can come in” (Warren 54). Audience’s responses to music are similar; the idea is perhaps even truer regarding music than laughter.

The following chapters analyze some of the intersections between theatre, music and hegemony, with particular attention to the counterhegemonic reformulation that is almost anything but implicit in the traditional critical response to the genre. This study demonstrates how the treatment of musical theatre subjects has historically been meaningful to audience members other than those in the dominant culture. It suggests that there are many reasons musical theatre is so popular, and that musicals give voice to a wide swath of their audience members and will continue to do so long into the future.

“Whatever happened to old values?
And fine morals?
And good breeding?
Now no one even says “oops” when they’re
Passing their gas.
Whatever happened to class?”
“Class”– *Chicago* (Fred Ebb)

CHAPTER II

“WHATEVER HAPPENED TO CLASS” IN THE AMERICAN MUSICAL?

The “great national suggestion” is Jennifer Hochschild’s reinterpretation of the “great American dream,” which holds that there is no class structure within the United States, or that if there is, it is mutable. Her study, *Facing the American Dream* (1995) concluded that both whites and blacks still “overwhelmingly endorse the American dream, and most members of both races even believe that it describes most lives in America, sometimes including their own” (248). Even those who acknowledge that the United States does have a class structure will ignore that it has much effect. Norman Podhoretz, a contemporary essayist and novelist, has written *My Love Affair With America: The Cautionary Tale of a Cheerful Conservative* (2000), in which he suggests that America is not a classless society, but one in which the hardworking, talented, ambitious, and clever may prosper. He basically disregards class, saying that the best will always rise to the top, rather than the system being discriminatory or perhaps even keeping some of the “the best” from rising to the top.

During the nineteenth century, a middle-class American society struggled to reconcile the republican rhetoric of natural equality with the societal demand for an ordered hierarchy of authority within the household and ultimately within the nation itself (O’Leary, Chapter 4). In the end, “class has been the dirty secret of American history,

denied by promises of individual freedom, by dreams of upward mobility—memories that prove on inspection only to be recovered memory fantasies” (Sennett A21). At least one element of the myth surrounding America’s “classless” society actually proves that the boundaries within society are not easily crossed: novels, plays, musicals, and television all show what Laura Hapke refers to as “personal mobility” (41). It is precisely these media—particularly television—that bell hooks blames for promoting the

myth of the classless society, offering on the one hand images of an American dream fulfilled wherein any and everyone can become rich and on the other hand suggesting that the lived experience of this lack of class hierarchy was expressed in our equal right to purchase anything we could afford. . . . On television and in magazines, the rich were and are fictively depicted as caring and generous toward impoverished classes” (71).

Even when someone disagrees with this, they can often end up proving the point in reverse: Dick Meyer says that “Americans uniquely don’t identify themselves as part of a class, or think about politics in class terms or have class envy. In fact, they have massive aspirations to move up in class rank” (Meyer n.p.).

When discussing economic and social classes, everyone seems to have some idea of what the terms mean; “poll data indicate that most Americans recognize the existence of a clearly identifiable, patterned class structure as well as the reality and importance of class inequalities” (Perrucci and Wysong 6). Yet there is a troublesome absence of exactness with regard to any definitions of “class,” particularly as it plays out in this country.⁵ And yet audiences know what an author means by “working-class” or by “blue-collar,” even as a discrete definition eludes them.

⁵ William Sumner, as early as 1883, wrote of this very occurrence: “It is commonly asserted that there are in the United States no classes, and any allusion to classes is resented.” Yet he also notes that such terms as “the poor” and “the laborers” were regularly used in ways that suggested their definitions were both “exact” and “well-understood” (Sumner 13).

For example, “‘working-class,’ not to mention ‘proletarian’ is vague terminology in a country where class boundaries are supposed to be fluid” (Hapke xii). Nearly everyone works, at some level. A Marxist would imply that that term consists of those workers who are not bosses, who do not control and/or own the means of production. Yet many “blue-collar”⁶ workers oversee at least a few other employees, and remain so low in a company’s hierarchy (not to mention the American class system) that they receive none of the direct or indirect benefits of such a position. And many “white-collar” workers do not own a means of production. In fact, no matter in which sector of the economy people work, the vast majority of the world’s population conforms to Marx’s definition of working-class: those who are compelled to sell their ability to work in order to earn a wage on which they can survive. So the confusion remains, intensifying whenever the subject is scrutinized; the terms utilized imply a binary in what is one of the most obvious continuums in this country.

Many books and articles have spent a great deal of time proving that “class divisions are losing their self-evident and pervasive character” (Pakulski and Waters 1) or are even disappearing entirely (see McMurrer and Sawhill, Arnove, Perelman). Yet others insist it still matters greatly, even pointing out that class is related to matters other than simple economics: race, sexuality, and/or gender (Arnove 2, Perrucci and Wysong). Class, no matter which way it is examined, is obviously what Martin J. Burke calls a “contestable concept” (xii), or one which simply varies in meaning from theorist to theorist.

As it seems presumptuous to offer a definitions of class and class structure where so many sociologists have failed to provide one, I will utilize the suggestions of Gibson-

⁶ Another problematic term.

Graham, Resnick, and Wolff as a basis for the examination of class throughout the following chapter. The group posits two elements to the discourse on class. “The first, and more familiar, gives us class as a social ranking. . . . The second refers to an economic relation (of exploitation) between producers and nonproducers. . . . These two sets of distinctions/relations are often partially and confusingly combined” (3). Using these two definitions as a basis, “class” in this chapter means a group that shares the same status, whether that be economic, social, or a combination of both. In fact, the combination of the three is a great portion of what seems to constitute class in the United States, as seen in the myth that economic reverses on either side do not necessarily change a person’s social standing (much), or more particularly, change the judgments given by the arbiters of such things. Examples abound in popular culture. The Clampetts in *The Beverly Hillbillies* are continually derided by the majority of Beverly Hills residents, despite their enormous fortune; the Howells on *Gilligan’s Island* remain blue-bloods even on those episodes when they (temporarily) lose their money.

Musical theatre has often dealt with matters of class, and there has also been a strong trend within the genre away from the simplistic myths disparaged by bell hooks. The discussion goes back to the musical theatre’s beginnings: in minstrelsy there was a large amount of burlesquing the upper-class, particularly their manners and entertainment. Burlesques of opera were common, and “virtually every minstrel company averaged at least one or two Italian opera choruses per evening after 1846,” traditionally with new, parodic lyrics (Mahar 101). Political stump speeches were satiric and a firm part of most minstrel shows, as was political satire of all kinds (Mahar 74).

Society climbers were parodied, with particular care given the newly rich who still managed to vilify those in the classes from which they sprang (Mahar 174).

A Glance at New York (1848) contains enough songs to qualify as at least an early antecedent to musical theatre. It also contains the Mose the Bowery B'hoy, a character who became exceedingly popular as the years went by. He is well-summarized by Laura Hapke, who calls him "a worker refusing to be work-involved but contemptuous of the nonworking elite" (24). And although many of the earlier musicals such as *H.M.S. Pinafore* (1878), *Irene* (1919) and *Sally* (1920) portray a Cinderella-like character rising through society due to the sheer goodness of her personality, class movement has usually been portrayed as a much more complex set of issues on the musical theatre stage. And just as these works—along with *My Fair Lady* (1956), *Mame* (1966), and *Reilly and the 400*—express the friendship between classes that bell hooks speaks of, other musicals such as *The Cradle Will Rock* (1937), *Carousel*, and *Floyd Collins* express the gulf between the classes as singular and essentially uncrossable.

There is, however, a strong element in American thought that the class lines can be crossed: "Despite this nation's history of sharp labor-capital antagonisms, it remains Americans' ideology of 'exceptionalism' that class boundaries seem fluid in a country of such unlimited economic possibility" (Hapke 5). Class structure and the myths of exceptionalism that surround it make the musicals examined in this chapter perhaps more revolutionary than any of the other topics covered in this dissertation. The idea of "class," as a societal distinction between groups, is imposed from without. In this respect, it is much like gender, ethnicity, or sexuality. On the other hand, class is also traditionally considered the member of this group which has been perceived as the most

fluid. In other words, America has set forth a myth that the boundaries of class are relatively fluid. From a poststructuralist standpoint, wherein there are no inherent constructions, class is perhaps the one characteristic with the least permeable boundaries, and the others listed above have been recognized as far less stable than heretofore acknowledged.

To the general public, however, class permeability is still the dream that gives America much of its character, perhaps because, as Gibson-Graham, et. al, put it, “the various classes have no clearly specified boundaries or functional roles” (3), which leads back to the cloudy definitions mentioned above. Unlike countries with an aristocracy, the United States tells its citizens that class distinctions are porous and that social distinctions do not officially exist. Class “is the one topic that has been consistently marginalized and ignored by the schools, the mass media, and by most political leaders (Perrucci and Wysong 37). While musicals are often considered popular culture with little “serious” value, they rarely partake in “the culture industry’s tendency to channel mass entertainment in directions that distract public attention from class-based issues” (Perrucci and Wysong 207-208). The works examined herein (and many others) flatly subvert the prevailing theory that there is no class structure in America. In the three musicals analyzed in this chapter, this criticism ranges from the satire of the upper classes in *Reilly and the 400* to a more aggressive censure of the system in pieces such as *Carousel* and *Floyd Collins*.

The first musical examined in this chapter, *Reilly and the 400*, emphasizes social mobility and the permeability of social boundaries. The second two, *Carousel* and *Floyd Collins*, both look at class boundaries as relatively impermeable, as well as exhibiting a

response to the class warfare that is almost Marxist in its leanings. Neither Billy in the first musical, nor Floyd in the latter, seem to have much of a chance—of change, or even of life—with the structures in place as they stand.

“Feeling aisy in high society:” The Gilded Age and the Four Hundred

Charles Darwin published his *Origin of the Species* in 1859. His theory of biological determinism would eventually give way to a social determinism, one in which claims of cultural inferiority and superiority were “explained” by “substituting culture for genes;” these explanations “argue that the relative socioeconomic success of each ethnic group depends upon the extent to which it exemplifies a given set of cultural values” (Steinberg 79). Within this social determinism, social class position is explained in terms of income, education, and occupation (Steinberg 89).

The tension between social class positions took many forms during the late 1800s, and literature—written and theatrical—examined it with a vengeance. For example, “in the years between 1870 and 1910, a special, new type of book became commonplace in homes across America:” the success manual (Hilkey 1). The books often suggest a “class-divided social order . . . but one in which upward mobility appears possible” (25). These books were immensely popular, and the market seemed impossible to satisfy. At the same time, Horatio Alger, Jr. (1832-1899) was writing on much the same subject in his novels. He wrote over 120 such novels, which “told everyone, no matter how poor, orphaned or powerless, that if they persevere, if they do their best, if they always try to do the right thing, they can succeed. Success was earned by hard work and right action”

(Horatio Alger Society, n.p). Of course, this “success” was signified by a rise in both social and economic status.

There were other authors who were concerned about what they saw as the growing division between these classes. In fact, three of the six best-selling books between 1870 and 1910

addressed themselves to the so-called ‘Social Question,’ the concern that as great fortunes were amassed by the few, the nation would become divided between haves and have-nots and that the resulting conflict between capital and labor would deteriorate into class warfare. . . . [W]hat these critical works had in common that made them so different from the success manuals was their belief that the new industrial order had generated ills that the lone individual was helpless to redress or overcome (Hilkey 87-88).⁷

Elsewhere, rioting became more and more prevalent during the years after the Civil War, often between members of the classes who were competing for the same low-paying jobs: the Irish and the African-Americans, for instance (Gilje 108-115, see also Bruce). At other times, “labor competition played a small role, and it was the cultural differences alone that led to collective action,” including riots (Gilje 123). There was violence in the air, and that violence often concerned the very groups Edward Harrigan portrayed; on his stage, violence often erupts as well, but is typically resolved with few injuries or hurt feelings.

Another literary and theatrical trend of this era was the rise of dialect literature, which is defined as “a strong thematic interest in the cultural and political issues surrounding questions of linguistic variety.” There was an explosion of dialect literature during the so-called Gilded Age, and “a large group of texts in Gilded Age literature . . .

⁷ The three volumes were Henry George’s *Progress and Poverty: An Inquiry into the Causes of Industrial Depression and Increase of Want with Increase of Wealth the Remedy* (1879); 2) Edward Bellamy’s

explore the cultural and aesthetic politics of dialect difference;” many of these works “overturn linguistic hegemony” (G. Jones 2). What they do *not* overturn, however, is class structure. In Mark Twain’s *Pudd’nhead Wilson*, the young man who has been brought up as a poor African-American is dismissed at the end with a short paragraph mentioning his unfitness for the rich society he was actually born into. Twain says that he found himself “in a most embarrassing situation. He could neither read nor write, and his speech was the basest dialect of the negro (sic) quarter” (114). His speech patterns are mentioned very early in the description and he is declared unfit for the upper echelons of society because of them.

Edward Harrigan’s works explore both themes in detail—that of failure/success within immigrants’ lives in New York, and the overturning of cultural authority within a linguistic investigation of those same immigrants’ lives. Harrigan spent his career exploring the lives of these people, and “no playwright had ever explored New York’s low life so lovingly” (Moody 5), or in such a popular vein. Harrigan himself said of his penchant for tenement dwellers that

polite society, wealth, and culture possess little or not color and picturesqueness. The chief use I make of them is as a foil to the poor, the workers, and the great middle class. The average gentleman is so stereotyped that he has no value except in those plays where he is a pawn on the chessboard of melodramatic vice or tragic sin (qtd in Finson xxiii).

In other words, Harrigan’s sympathies, like those of the creators of the other shows discussed in this chapter, lay with the poor, rather than with the members of the 400.

Ward McAllister coined the term “The Four Hundred” just two years before the 1990 premiere of Edward Harrigan’s *Reilly and the 400*; the term was a designation of

Looking Backward: 2000-1887 (1888); and 3) William H. Harvey’s *Coin’s Financial School* (1894) (Hilkey 87).

the people who “mattered” in New York during this period. The figure was arbitrary, supposedly the number who fit comfortably into Delmonico’s ballroom or that of Mrs. Astor (Patterson 82-83). This was the era dubbed by Mark Twain as “the Gilded Age” of America; “Twain captured the ridiculousness, the cant and the pretentiousness of a post-Civil War America” in which “the air is full of money, nothing but money, money floating through the air” (Fraser n.p.). Historians disagree on the exact dates of the age, but all agree that it began after the Civil War and was over by World War I. Jerry Patterson, in *The First Four Hundred: Mrs. Astor’s New York in the Gilded Age*, repeatedly asserts the arbitrariness of the list finally set down for the newspapers in 1892, maintaining that those whom McAllister liked (or who he thought could help him in his rise through society) were on the list whether they officially qualified or not; “when he chose, McAllister overlooked these supposed inflexible requirements” such as “birth, background, and breeding” (Patterson 82). Everything about the list bespeaks the idea of society as a completely arbitrary machine: its size and its inclusivity, especially when hard-pressed. The only thing those on the list actually seemed to have in common was immense wealth and national celebrity because of it.

“Oh, who has not heard of the four?:” *Reilly and the 400*

Inclusion in The Four Hundred confirmed that societal class was arbitrary, although no one seemed to notice it at the time. Harrigan, who became the toast of American theatre, was himself the child of an Irish immigrant father, and would take the idea a step further, arguing that class comes not from without, revealed by lists. Instead, he demonstrates in his most enduring musical that class comes from within, and is exhibited by a person’s behavior.

The members of the “400” who appear in *Reilly and the 400* are sympathetic, well-rounded, and are allowed to sing as much as the lower-class characters, but they are also the subjects of a fair amount of ridicule simply for being themselves, mockery to which the lower classes are not subjected.

One of Harrigan’s broad themes was that the centripetal force of the tenement community was more powerful than the centrifugal force of individualistic social mobility. Cordelia’s ambition to move out of Mulligan’s Alley is turned against her, and Reilly’s ventures among the Four Hundred are the stuff of satire. (Williams 168).

For a man whose social and economic climb essentially paralleled that of Reilly, it is essentially logical that *Reilly and the 400* was Harrigan’s greatest hit. However satiric the work may be, there is essentially a happy ending, with the exceptionalism of Reilly—and of all immigrants and working-class citizens in the audience—firmly maintained.

While it might be true that “the notion that everyone can be wealthy has supplanted the idea of the United States as a classless society” (hooks 80), Wily Reilly’s story is about something more than mere wealth. The year that *Reilly and the 400* opened was the beginning of the biggest ever influx of immigrants to America. Israel Zangwill’s play *The Melting Pot*, which appeared in 1908, would more or less cap the mood of the era, to the point where its name passed into common parlance as a major understanding of America. *Reilly and the 400* went further, proving that the newly arrived citizens could, in fact, reach the highest heights. “It stands to Harrigan and Braham’s credit that they could place the life and struggles of the urban poor in any kind of sympathetic light, when most books of the time deal in lurid descriptions of the sin, vice, and depravity that plagued the disadvantaged” (Finson xxvi).

It was the Gilded Age that saw the timely premiere of *Reilly and the 400* in 1890. The work was among Harrigan's last, but was also his most astoundingly successful. With music by his father-in-law, David Braham, the musical premiered on December 29; it was the work which opened Harrigan's new theatre in New York after a long absence on the road. Despite the fact that much of the excitement surrounding the work concerned Harrigan and company's return to their hometown, the show was popular enough on its own to run 200 performances that season and an additional 136 the next. The critics loved the work too, although the *New York Times* felt the show could be trimmed by an hour with no real loss (Finson 247).

Harrigan wrote the title role for himself, originally intending it to be a Jewish pawnbroker named Cohen. His wife would not allow him to write or portray such a character, saying "You've got to play the thing they think you are; and besides you can't open in my theatre as a Jew; don't forget I own it" (qtd in Moody 188).⁸ And Harrigan was indeed a wily Irishman. More than one authority has suggested that the rise of Wily Reilly from tenement to society paralleled Harrigan's own (see Finson).

Harrigan provided nearly everything he was famous for in *Reilly*: melees,⁹ catchy songs, and a clash of accents and ethnic types. It is the look at the upper crust that particularly distinguishes this work from his earlier ones. Harrigan was best-known for his examinations of lower-class life; the upper-classes were generally discerned by their absence from his musicals. In *Reilly and the 400*, he widened the parameters on both

⁸ E.J. Kahn, Jr. has a more positive version of the conversation: "She said his public doted on him as an Irishman, and that he would be foolish to risk disappointing them" (274). The Moody quotation is taken from Harrigan's taped memoirs; regardless of which version of the story is true, Annie has a point; Harrigan's last Jewish male lead character, Mordecai Grimes, had flopped. See Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

⁹ A large brawl or contest that ended in major onstage destruction.

sides. Moody says of the work that “the revelation of low life was so startling, so true to life that many crowded into Harrigan’s theatre, not only to gape at the upper crust at play, but to observe the toughs at close range without risking assault” (189).

The libretto concerns itself with a series of love stories, most of which cross class boundaries. The story involves Wily Reilly, a pawnbroker who has never publicly acknowledged his son, Ned; he treats him this way in order to allow Ned access to the upper reaches of society. Ned is in love with Emiline, as is Herman Smeltz. Smeltz has gained access to the Four Hundred, but started life as a ship’s butcher who was court-martialed and tattooed with a pig’s snout for having stolen a pig. Smeltz has discovered a rumor that Ned is the son of a pawnbroker and plans on winning Emiline’s hand by proving it. Reilly, with his housekeeper Mary Ann, pose as Ned’s uncle and aunt (Sir William and Lady Isabel Reilly), a baronet and his sister from Ballymacfuddy. They all appear at Commodore Toby’s house for a ball. The Commodore, who is Emiline’s uncle, has built his house to look like a ship, inside and out, and runs it in much the same way. He is also in love with Reilly’s housekeeper, Mary Ann, but has been unable to declare his love for fear high society will disapprove. Of course, true love wins in the end, with the following couples at show’s end: Ned and Emiline, Commodore Toby and Mary Ann, and Reilly and the Commodore’s sister, Lavinia. Ned and Reilly have acknowledged their deception, with neither woman caring. Smeltz is found out for the villain he is and is thrown from the Commodore’s house (and presumably, the Four Hundred).

As befits a work starring a pawnbroker, money plays a central idea, although “class” is denoted throughout as more than simply economic, and even more than social.

Although never stated out loud, Reilly will also figure into another dictionary definition of class: the best of his kind. He makes everyone around him comfortable, and while both he and Smeltz have made their way up from the lower classes (both by lying, in fact), Reilly has lied for a noble cause: to protect and help his son.

The very beginning of *Reilly* establishes a conversation regarding money and ownership, both symbols of American success. The opening stage directions describe the interior of Reilly's pawnshop, complete with an open safe containing a ledger. The first lines of the work contain interplay between Reilly's maid, Bessie, and the milkman; these lines begin the intertwining of wit and money so prominent throughout the play. Bessie tells the milkman she has diabetes. As part of the extraordinary punning endemic to Harrigan's work, the milkman replies "Oh! Your blood's turning to sugar!" Since "sugar" is also contemporary slang for money, Bessie replies, "Yes, I'll die rich" (250).

This first scene also launches the direction of Reilly's social and economic travel. Act I introduces as its first characters the lowest echelon of hired help and works its way up through society's echelons. The tradesmen appear to make their deliveries to the maid, Bessie. Bessie is the lowest rung of the social ladder not only because she's the maid, but because she's African-American. Harrigan's African-American characters present something of a problem for modern audiences, despite what are obviously his attempts at inclusivity onstage: "African Americans are portrayed as an ethnic group equal to any other, with their own culture and traditions of which they are proud" (Finson xxx). The problems come not only with unpleasant terminology within the scripts, but also because these characters tend to be represented as thieves and cheats. Still, Harrigan's African-American characters also sing with a great deal of frequency,

something the most unsympathetic characters in his plays do not; singing is, after all, the currency by which characters on the musical stage negotiate their positions. Harrigan's African-Americans are also solid characters who give as good as they get from white society. It is important to note that Harrigan assumes Bessie's race; he never describes her to the reader, and we will only learn this later, from hints through the rest of this act. However, while even Bessie has access to social mobility, it is only through her work as a servant. She, too, will advance in society, but only because she moves from being a maid for Reilly to being one for the Commodore.

The next character to appear is Mary Ann, beloved by the Commodore and Reilly's housekeeper; she is Bessie's superior. She is also one of the primary characters to cross societal boundaries through the performance. Her entrance also concerns money; she arrives contesting the vegetable delivery man's assertion that Reilly should pay for a half-eaten stalk of celery he is delivering. Mary Ann refuses; when it is discovered that the milkman's horse ate the celery, the two men step outside to settle the matter. Mary Ann picks up the half-eaten stalk from the floor, muttering "Waste not, want not" (251).

Reilly enters upon this adage. He is still higher up the social scale, wearing "a white waistcoat, black hat, and riding gloves" (252). Still later in Act I, we meet first Herman Smeltz, who started life as a butcher but has joined the Four Hundred, and the Commodore who, together with his sister and daughter, are the only three of the major characters who will not change social status by the musical's end.

There is one other set of characters who should be examined: Reilly's neighbors and customers. These include the "toughs" which Moody says many audience members

came to see, particularly. Kitty Lynch appears in the pawnshop and “drew more applause than Harrigan with much less to do and say.”

When Kitty appeared at Reilly’s pawnshop to retrieve the shoes her brother had pawned—dressed in a tight little jersey jacket, a long, shabby, patched skirt with frayed edges, a shapeless black hat pulled over her stringy hair, and her feet pushing out of town shoes, stooping because she felt too tall for the part—shoved out her hand ‘with the peculiar tough-girl gesture,’ and whined, ‘Say, Reilly gimme me shoes!’” cheers broke across the gallery, then descended to the balcony and orchestra. (Moody 190)

It is noteworthy that the cheaper seats began the cheer, perhaps because that portion of the audience, the poorer (and by extension, lower-class) members, were seeing themselves represented onstage.

The two major African American characters do relate to the rest of the cast, particularly within the realm of social mobility. Bessie and her boyfriend, Salvator, are both servants. As mentioned above, Bessie is the lowest rung of the social ladder at Reilly’s. Salvator is the Commodore’s servant, and has trappings of *commedia*’s tricky servant about him. He enters the pawnshop to sell “de sweepins of the fo’castle, de store room and the cabin;” this bundle contains the old log book which will ultimately prove Smeltz’s undoing (the story of his ignoble beginnings is in it). Salvator describes himself as “one of de four. . . . Well, dat is I’m not exactly one of the four, but I cut a figure among ‘em” (255). In this world of social permeability, not to mention social aspiration, his words ring true for more than just himself.

When Salvator finds that the missing log book is worth fifty dollars to Smeltz, he immediately enlists Bessie’s help to switch it with another book that has come into the shop (the irony is that, since neither of them can read, they switch the wrong book). He then tells her that he has procured a place for her on the Commodore’s staff, which is

advantageous, as Reilly will eventually find the book gone. Salvator leaves with a cheery “Ta. Ta” (274), an affectation surely picked up from the 400 he so readily introduces himself as part of.

Salvator and Bessie appear in Act II as the Commodore’s servants, which is the only social movement exhibited by an African-American character within the play. Their specific status never changes, but they are at least servants to a member of the 400. The two are seen among their own social class in Casey’s Hall. The scene has a catfight between Bessie and her rival for Salvator’s affections (one of Harrigan’s famous “melees”), but more importantly from a class standpoint, engages in a dance contest between her and a white Irish woman, Maggie Murphy. Maggie wins the contest, but only because Bessie has a leg cramp. So again, while there are obviously class levels even among the lower societal strata, Harrigan allows those “below” in rank to at least put up a good fight.

The other end of the spectrum is, of course the “400,” represented by Percy Oggles (a friend of Emiline), the Commodore and his family, and the 400 themselves. Percy is the only non-familial member of society to appear by character name. He is the first to arrive at the family’s “slumming party,” and allows Harrigan his greatest parodic freedom within the musical. Percy is described in the stage directions as “a swell in a business suit” (282). It is particularly within Percy’s reaction to Ned that Harrigan’s opinions regarding the various classes appear. Oggles scornfully refers to Ned as “anonymous” when discussing the rumor of Ned’s father being a pawnbroker. A changeable man, however, he immediately discloses that he “will have to thicken my English accent” upon learning that Ned’s “uncle,” a Baronet, will appear at the upcoming

party. Upon finding that the Baronet is Irish, Percy again replaces “English accent” with “Irish brogue” (282). Much as is the case in musical examples of antisemitism (discussed in Chapter 3), the upper crust’s own ideas and views are used against them to show how vacant and meaningless society can be, while emphasizing by contrast how personable and worthwhile the lower classes are. More significantly, Harrigan uses those in the highest class to illustrate exactly how superficial and behavioral American response to “class” is.

It is through Percy that the fads and fashions of the upper crust are most directly satirized. He is present for a slumming party, which is “an English fad,” as Emiline calls it. “Our British cousins set the pace,” he replies (281). When the conversation turns to Europe, Percy nonchalantly describes his new predilection: to stay in America. “I’ve Come Home To Stay”¹⁰ begins with a lyric parodic in itself; each time Percy attempts to claim authority of his own, he undercuts himself, thus subverting any pretensions to superiority that he (and by extension, that the rest of the 400) may have. He has already acquired a British accent (part of his pretentiousness) while in London¹¹ (281).

Alongside the lyric, however, Braham has written music that underscores and emphasizes the song’s satiric content. “I’ve Come Home to Stay” is a sentimental waltz with more chromaticism than is usual for Braham, particularly in the accompaniment. What this chromaticism does is literally introduce romanticism into a song that appears to be about love of one’s home, but is in fact about the newest fad of love of one’s home;

¹⁰ As with all the songs discussed in this dissertation that are not well-known or easily found, the lyric of “I’ve Come Home To Stay” is printed in the Appendix.

¹¹ It is possible that Percy is meant to be a satiric version of Ward McAllister. McAllister, an American, also had an affected set of British pronunciations (Patterson 71).

the sentimental accompaniment, in particular, undercuts Percy's vaunted feelings about his country.

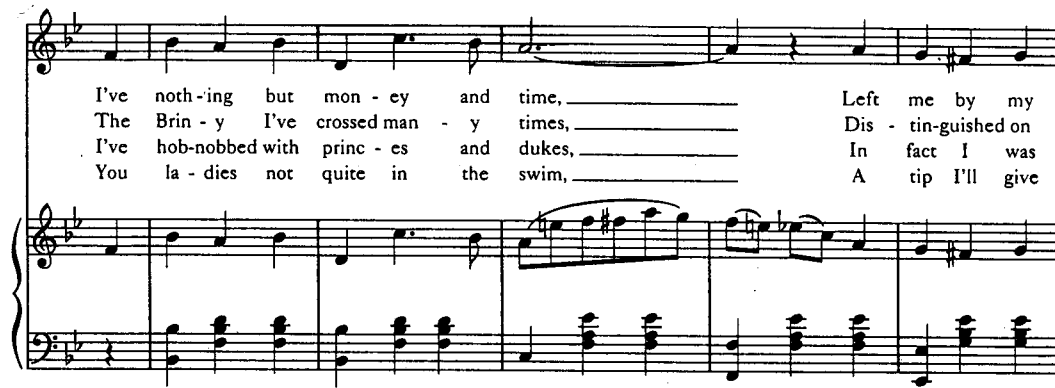


Figure 2.1: "I've Come Home To Stay."

By the early years of the twentieth century, upper-class characters in musicals will be portrayed as both bored and boring, essentially needing the lower-class characters to breathe some life into their existence. This will be repeated in shows such as *Irene* (1919) and *Oh, Kay!* (1926), and it will continue on into television shows such as *The Honeymooners* (1955), *The Flintstones* (1960), and *Roseanne* (1988), all shows that concentrated on working-class characters. Even in musicals by Cole Porter, himself no working-class composer, the rich tend to sing of a vague boredom and/or malaise for which they often have no real language. *Reilly's* Commodore Toby is eccentric enough to both be interesting and to embrace the lower-class characters. Mary Ann says early in Act I that "the Commodore hates snobs" (253). He is certainly not above "slumming" himself, as he travels to Reilly's shop to court Mary Ann and leads the characters there in a drinking song about his life at sea.

The word "eccentric," which is used to introduce the Commodore's sister Lavinia, fits the Commodore far better, and it is a commonplace that what would read as madness

or insanity in poorer people is often called eccentricity in the rich. In fact, comically enough, it becomes a style among the rich. Emiline tells us that “since Uncle introduced this newest thing of ship architecture, Major Sutling of the 7th has fitted up his cottage at Newport like a barracks” (281). In fact, the eccentricity of architecture and lifestyle is fairly minor, which fits in with what else we know of the Commodore. He is a bluff, plain-spoken man who speaks his mind and loves all things naval; the only reason for his near-obsession with the stolen log book is that his collection of logbooks is no longer complete. All this is in strong opposition to the portrait of Percy. The latter is not presented without sympathy, but it is obvious that the audience is encouraged to laugh at both him and his pretensions. Meanwhile, while the Commodore Toby’s eccentricities are presented for laughter, he himself is most emphatically not.

The Commodore wants to marry beneath his station, something his sister will eventually do as well. The difference between him and his family is that he knows the social difference between Mary Ann and himself exists all along, and accepts it happily. He does, however, have to “steal down here under cover to meet his Mary Ann” (265) at Reilly’s shop, due to the expected disapproval from his family and the 400. The difference springs more from gender than class; men are allowed more freedom in who they choose. Lavinia is free to marry Reilly, but notably, it is he who does the asking.

There are three socially liminal primary characters within *Reilly and the 400*, all of whom rise to (or fall from) high society (personified by “the 400”). Mary Ann, like the women of the Commodore’s family, goes along under a man’s shadow at any given time. She works for Reilly and abets his plan for the ball, and she simply goes from his house to the Commodore’s. She does get her fair share of puns and typical Harrigan

wordplay, and is definitely a strong character, but she does little on her own. Mary Ann and Reilly's rise in society support the idea of exceptionalism within American society. They act honestly and kindly, thinking of others more than themselves, supporting the idea that there is a kind of collective reward system in place.

Herman Smeltz, on the other hand, does a great deal on his own, and moves downward, out of high society. Harrigan obviously does not have any objections to the "appropriateness" of Smeltz's simply belonging to society: Percy Oggles is as egocentric as Smeltz, and yet is a sympathetic character. Reilly and Mary Ann employ chicanery in their moving up from the lower classes, much as Smeltz did. It seems as if the primary reason Smeltz is a villain is that he cannot bring himself to play fair once he has arrived within the Four Hundred. He is cruel and uncaring toward others, and he steals (both in the beginning of his career as a ship's butcher and as he attempts to steal the logbook). He also runs a "sausage trust," having bought out all the other butcher shops in the area, so he has gotten rid of any competition. Reilly never discusses other pawnbrokers, but he is never shown as anything but fair, no matter how many competitors he might have.

Unlike Percy, Smeltz condescends to the poorer people around him; Percy will certainly go "slumming," but does seem to have a very good time at the dance. Smeltz says of Reilly's shop "It is very low down for a millionaire like me to be going around in these far down place" (259); of course, the Commodore is already in Reilly's backroom, assisting Mary Ann with drinks. Finally, Smeltz cares more for money and prestige than he does for Emiline, whom he is attempting to marry. Herman's comment about his expected wedding is that "Dere will be fifty million in de church." Reilly asks if he is talking about Germans, but the reply is "No, dollars."

Smeltz' quick downward course also supports the divine reward/punishment system, but more than that, it seems to spring not from his general unpleasantness, but because he is the polar opposite of Reilly. He lies, but unlike Reilly, his deceptions are for no one but himself. Smeltz pursues his cause by attempting to discredit Ned; Ned himself is never anything but genuine and open in his dealings with others. Most importantly, Smeltz began his life as a thief and has lied about that event ever since. This is unacceptable in Reilly's world. In fact, class is once again shown to be the result of behavior, not an innate accident of birth; both men start life poor and as a member of the lower class.

The very fact that Smeltz is German may account for a great deal of his unpleasant character.¹² According to Finson, the Germans rarely get a chance to sing in Harrigan's plays, and it is obvious that author's sympathies are with those groups he allows to sing. The Germans were not portrayed as negatively as other ethnic groups, such as the Chinese, but they never rise above the two-dimensional (Finson xxxi-xxxii). Herman is the butt of comic hilarity when he enters the Commodore's ball still wearing his overshoes. Reilly, who seems to fit in wherever he goes, is obviously meant to pass as one of Nature's gentlemen; Smeltz cannot. Even in Harrigan's significant attempts to portray the underclass, there are (literal) silences with regard to song. Class is bound up with ethnicity, as well, and Harrigan does not (or cannot) shed that part of the environment he saw around him.

Reilly is, as befits the eponymous character in the work, the most interesting character in the play, both economically and socially. He exhibits throughout (as do

¹² Herman the German simply cannot be a coincidence.

characters such as Enoch Snow in *Carousel*) what Janet Zandy refers to as an “hegemonic two-ness” (12). That is, he is a part of two social and economic worlds throughout the majority of this musical, yet belongs completely to neither. He runs a pawnshop, where he meets people on their way down (whether from high or low beginnings). It is almost immediately that we learn that Reilly has taken a page from many dramatic heroes and heroines and has sacrificed his own standing for that of his son. He will not publicly acknowledge that Ned is his son so that the young man can become part of high society. And while neither Reilly nor his son are ashamed of what the pawnbroker does for a living,

there is something about our trade prevents a man from feeling aisy in high society. My father could have been an M.P. at home, but for his calling. Our particularr (sic) profession must not be mentioned in the gilded salons of the upper circles. There’s a margin between pawning a railroad and an eight day clock. The poor welcome me with a smile and the rich with a frown, but today society looks up to my boy without smelling the taint of an unredeemed pledge. (253-254)¹³

Reilly also aids in matching the Commodore and Mary Ann, and brings about Smeltz’s downfall only when it appears the German will unmask them all at the Commodore’s ball. In reality, the first response of both Ned and Reilly as to their identities is to agree to the truth; it is only after this that Reilly literally blows the whistle on Herman. The entire story of his court-martial emerges, he is thrown out of the Commodore’s house, and presumably the 400.

Reilly’s speech also illuminates another side of Harrigan’s philosophy regarding class. Wealth is most certainly *not* the key to class. Reilly sees money come and go in his profession, and while the reactions of rich and poor are obviously different to

¹³ There is perhaps more than a hint of a Christ figure within Reilly, particularly in his sacrifices for his son and with lines such as “unredeemed pledge.”

pawning objects, both are part of his purview regarding society. Regardless of *his* reception, he knows that his son is welcome everywhere, without the money the upper echelons prize so much.

Reilly's song of introduction is similar to those sung by many of Harrigan's other heroes, a direct presentation to the audience in much the same manner of many Gilbert and Sullivan characters. "'Uncle Reilly,' while not an actual jig, has the feel of a slow jig, with a circular melodic pattern that tends toward a dance feel."¹⁴ Far less stereotypical a song about pawnbrokers than the same introductory type of number sung by Mordecai Lyons (see Chapter 3), we are obviously meant to believe both men in their assessments of themselves (as opposed to, say, Percy). With that in mind, Reilly comes across as exactly what he claims: "everybody's friend." Further beyond that, however, he conflates the idea of lovers as holding each other's hearts in pawn, and refers to himself as "Cupid's pawnbroker" (276). In keeping with the tradition that will continue through the early twentieth-century musicals mentioned earlier, the show's finale is a reprise of this song, sung by everyone, where Reilly has obviously taught the high society snobs to unbend and have fun.

This finale is in marked contrast to the song sung earlier by the 400, entitled "The Great Four Hundred." The song is in E-flat, the same key as Reilly's number, which could be considered a link between the pawnbroker and the society he will eventually enter.¹⁵ Regardless, "The Great Four Hundred" is, like Percy's song, unintentionally

¹⁴ The lyric supports the idea that the choruses were sung by the full company; otherwise, Reilly switches continually from first to third person.

¹⁵ Examination of songs' keys in musical theatre is more problematic than looking at the same topic in opera. Songs in musicals are more often placed in keys comfortable for a singer.

satiric of the characters singing it. The song is a gavotte¹⁶ and prefigures quite closely what Lerner and Loewe will do in *My Fair Lady* (1956) with the same dance and the same section of society, in “The Ascot Gavotte.” In clipped, dotted rhythms, the chorus sings of how wonderful and exciting their lives are. As an example of how the music elevates the lyric to further parody, imagine the following portion of the lyric with music and style similar to “The Ascot Gavotte.”

Oh, who has not heard of the four, the four?
At home or abroad we adore, adore
The fads of fickle fashion,
Really, ‘tis a passion,
To follow up the hounds, Tally Ho;
Oh, there goes the fox, hi-a-way, away!
We dash whip and spur to the fray, hurray!
Horses madly rearing,
Country people staring,
The Great Four Hundred, don’t you know. (323)

The melee, of course, occurs at the dance contest in Act II, in a lower-class setting. It might seem as if it would be funnier at the ball with the Four Hundred, but since Reilly is accepted by the time the audience finally sees the group, it isn’t as funny anymore.

Even contemporary critics understood the subversive qualities of the show. The *New York Times* finished its review with “it must be confessed that Mr. Harrigan’s ‘400’ is hardly identical with that described by Mr. Ward McAllister, but it serves the purpose of the author to lay bare the foibles of humanity in assuming a superiority to which it is not entitled” (qtd in Finson 247). It is remarkable that the *Times*, which also published the deeds of the 400, noted that society, or at least “humanity,” often assumes a

¹⁶ The stage directions state that Mary Ann and Reilly are left “dancing minuet” (323) after the ensemble finishes singing, but it is not impossible that there was an orchestral section after the song proper that was in $\frac{3}{4}$ (the “Dance” section of the published song is also in $\frac{4}{4}$). It is also possible that either the look of a stately minuet was what Harrigan was after, whether or not he realized the term was incorrect for a song not in triple meter.

“superiority to which it is not entitled.” However, the newspaper also ensured its safety by suggesting that the society folk presented onstage bore little resemblance to the authentic ones. Perhaps the 400 in Harrigan’s work is not identical to the real group, but there is hardly any doubt about that group’s identity. The review also supports the idea that Reilly succeeds because his fulfillment of “class” corresponds to another definition: not that of a social stratum, but that of being the “best of a kind.”

“When You Walk Through a Storm:” *Carousel*’s America

Rodgers and Hammerstein’s landmark *Oklahoma!* opened in 1943, two years before *Carousel*. The former was a phenomenally popular work; *Carousel* would open later, but still close before its predecessor. Part of this is assuredly attributable to the fact that *Oklahoma!*’s disposition, while cloudy at times, was basically sunny, and perhaps even patriotic. Ethan Mordden says of the naysayers in 1943 that they “simply failed to see how valuable such a piece might be in 1943, when the nation was fighting for the privilege of remaining American. In short, this show had a grip on what people were feeling at the time” (*R&H* 29-30). And while *Oklahoma!* does indeed touch on issues of class, *Carousel*’s more direct approach to the subject may have been a sore point for the many soldiers who believed that the draft board was an instrument of a classist society drafting primarily lower-class men (Adams 77).

America in April of 1945 was only approximately four months away from celebrating the end of World War II. The year had begun with news from Washington that further restrictions were in store for the country. There were additional reductions in the production of consumer goods (Casdorph 199). Shortages of all kinds, including

food, were plaguing the country; this must have been difficult for many to endure, given that America now “owned two-thirds of the world’s gold reserves, half its shipping, and more than half its manufacturing capacity” (Adams 114). In other words, while the private citizens might be enduring privations, the economy was beginning a boom which would continue for quite a while. The war had resulted in huge housing shortages; “by 1945, five million families were in substandard dwellings” (Adams 119).

By now, veterans from the prolonged war “could be seen everywhere during 1945 hurrying about looking for jobs and wives” (Casdorph 213). Women, of course, had gone to work in numbers totaling at least a million (Casdorph 214). When men returned, they often had great difficulty in finding employment. Posttraumatic stress disorder affected many returning soldiers; with less awareness of, and less help available for, this illness than today, alcohol abuse soared, as did divorce rates and spousal abuse (Adams 149-150). It is perhaps small wonder that audiences for *Carousel* might find it hit a little too close to home. On the other hand, it presumably showed more of their lives than many of the musical comedies of the era.

The New Class Society spends much of its second chapter discussing the view that America after World War II was grounded firmly in the idea of a reality that allowed for more movement between the classes (see Perrucci and Wysong). Perhaps it is even more subversive that Rodgers and Hammerstein would choose this era to produce a musical that so implicitly rebukes the idea of class mobility. On top of this, *Carousel* utilizes a great many of the same experiences that these Americans had with respect to class. A man, much like many of the soldiers fighting overseas, who feels that “we don’t matter at all,” fights for some kind of economic security for his family, and cannot handle his

inability to do so. Julie is a working woman, but once she is married, cannot earn money for the family.¹⁷ Finally, of course, like a great many soldiers and civilians, Billy ultimately loses his life.

“Millwork Ain’t Easy:” *Carousel*

Like *Oklahoma!*, *Carousel* began life as a non-musical play. Ferenc Molnar was born into a Budapest torn by war and internal political strife. His best known play, *Liliom* (1909), was originally written as a short story and failed on its first stage presentation, although it went on to many phenomenally successful productions. While the play has been called autobiographical, Molnar claimed he had written it to “dramatize a primitive legend of Budapest’s ‘lower depths’” (Gyorgyey 148), so even its original incarnation was based upon class distinctions and inequities. The story of Rodgers and Hammerstein’s adaptation is legendary; while neither believed the play could work as a musical, they kept returning to it, eventually re-setting it in New England. Hammerstein kept a large majority of the story intact, changing only the ending to indicate—in an alteration from Molnar’s original story—that the male lead has managed to move into salvation despite himself.

Carousel is set in the 1880s, in a small New England town predicated upon fishing and textile mills. Because the musical retains nearly all the play’s material, the weight the original work placed on class structure (Molnar’s “lower depths”) was also preserved. In fact, thanks to the additions of both Rodgers and Hammerstein, the examination of class was strengthened.

¹⁷ Much like many of the working women in America were expected to quit work after their men returned from the war.

Liliom's characters are almost entirely working-class, resentful or respectful of the system and its officials. One of the protagonist's most destructive impulses is his compulsion to bait authority. . . . Hammerstein not only retained this, but in turning Liliom to Billy, shows us more of the great world of grace and plenty that Billy has imagined as lying outside his reach—the world, in fact, that Hammerstein's reinvented Mr. Snow takes Carrie into when he turns from fisherman into canning magnate, a world free not only of want but of oppressive policemen" (Mordden *R&H* 79).

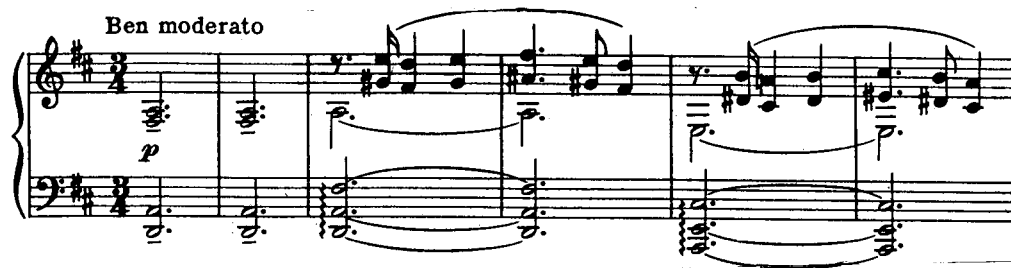
Ultimately, of course, the belief of both men that money brings one into the upper class is shown to be futile; Snow actually loses his humanity as he rises in society. Ethan Mordden also writes that "*Carousel* tells of . . . the ruin of a friendship between two proletarian women because of the social ambitions of the husband' (40s 89). Stephen Citron believes that Carrie and Enoch Snow's "middle-class conformity is strong contrast to Billy's lawlessness and Julie's blind, fatalistic acceptance of her husband's being out of step with the society around him" (*Wordsmiths* 174).

Throughout the work, class structure is seen as permeable by those in the lower class, although this is more a male idea. Billy, Jigger, and Enoch—and Mrs. Mullin—all attempt to rise in society by the accretion of money. Since class is not constructed only around money, three of them fail. Enoch, who consistently has an attitude that supports the prevailing authorities, succeeds, only to become a carbon copy of the mill owner. Billy is much more like a flawed Reilly, seen as redeemable and worth the love Julie has for him.

The musical received a major revival in both London and New York during the early 1990s. Directed by Nicholas Hytner, the famous opening began with an image of a giant clock under which the factory workers were toiling, which only morphed into the traditional park with carousel when their workday ended. "According to Oscar's son

James, the aforementioned 1993 revival came closer to achieving what his father had imagined” (Citron *Wordsmiths* 179). This achievement was realized both with regard to the emphasis on class as well as in how Billy was portrayed (as less a man unsure of himself and more “a man who’s ready to explode” [Citron *Wordsmiths* 179]).

The opening of *Carousel* is justifiably famous. *Oklahoma!* replaced the traditional musical choral opening with a lone woman onstage churning butter while an offstage singer began “Oh, What A Beautiful Morning.” *Carousel* ignored even the traditional overture, plunging immediately into a prologue set to music. Not actually dance, it has been called “acting in tempo” (Mordden *R&H* 74). The music establishes that this is not the happy world of *Oklahoma!*, and that things are not as uncomplicated as the previous show. There is a bitonality that begins this work’s first few measures; these harmonic clashes are not only similar to the actual slightly out of tune sound of a carousel, but they presage that this is not a world where everything is satisfactory.



named),¹⁸ Billy, Mrs. Mullins, and Carrie and Julie.

Bascombe's position in the town is set up from the very beginning. He is visiting the carnival with his family and is called upon to remove his son—who will not leave of his own volition—from the carousel. The stage directions describe Bascombe and the moment thusly:

a formidable fellow with sideburns on his cheeks and a heavy gold watch-chain across his belly . . . when he gets there [the carousel] he stands in back of David, Jr., with that stern look he reserves for such occasions. . . . [T]he family now walk across the stage with the pomp that befits the richest clan in the locality. They own the Bascombe Cotton Mills, 'a little way up the river.' Several people greet them with respectful awe, and they return a gracious but dignified bow to all" (92).

Billy, on the other hand, is seen working from the beginning. Not only does he labor, but he does so as a carnival barker, a profession not traditionally seen as reputable.

The scene thus establishes two classes and their representatives, Billy and Bascombe; the setting up of the dichotomy from the very beginning only reinforces the class struggle. From the outset, we see a family of the town's ruling nobility. Bascombe is described as "formidable," and the point is well-taken. The owners of cotton mills were in fact almost the owners of the town; they often built schools and churches for the area, "to encourage social order and regular behavior" (Parks and Folsom xxviii). The knowledge of how the town relates to Bascombe is supported by the first description of him by other characters. Carrie explains that "all Bascombe's girls hev to be respectable. We all hev to live in the mill boarding-house, and if we're late they lock us out and we can't go back to work there any more" (103). The scene continues in this same vein; when the policeman tries and fails to move Billy along as he talks with Carrie and Julie, Bascombe enters to arrange the solution. Julie is introduced to him by the policeman as

¹⁸ The Bascombes are Hammerstein's invention; no comparable characters appear in *Liliom*.

one of “your girls” (105), and when one of his possessions fails to perform as he believes she should, he dismisses her from his employment with a curt aside to the policeman: “You see, Timony! There are some of them you just can’t help” (106). This is apparently quite typical of the mill owners’ opinions. An 1836 essay by such a miller owner states “the moral manufacturer, without the power or disposition to overreach, is in reality a benefactor. The acquisition of wealth in this way, is the most laudable” (White 347). In fact, New England manufacturers obliged young women who applied for factory work to sign a “‘regulation paper’ and promise moral conduct, church attendance, and residence in a corporate boarding house” (Hapke 70). More importantly, the upper-class character who controls the town automatically classifies his workers as part of a group: “them.” When pushed, he is instantly dismissive of the entire class.

Bascombe’s response comes through a long line of employers’ responses to the working classes. George S. White wrote in 1836 of workers in a mill town: “The dependence between the employed and employers should be mutual. But by employing vicious, improvident, and indigent characters, the dependence falls mostly on one side—yet it is a benefit to the community that such a class should find employment and benefit” (351). White also believed that “multitudes of women and children have been kept out of vice, simply by being employed” (352). Employment equals morality, and vice-versa. In fact, Bascombe obviously outranks the law; the policeman defers his decisions to Bascombe and supports his every decision.¹⁹ *Carousel* consistently portrays characters who believe that economic strength is indicative of a person’s worth; it is no wonder that Billy, who has no such power, cannot conduct his life in socially acceptable modes.

¹⁹ Carrie, who will marry the budding capitalist, supports the system by going quietly with Bascombe, abandoning her friend.

Bascombe will appear once more in *Carousel*, as the man Jigger and Billy attempt to rob.²⁰ He is fully aware of the danger he is in as a rich man, and carries a more deadly weapon than do the two thieves: a gun versus their knife. He does not need it, however. The stage directions again betray Hammerstein's feelings about the hegemonic group: "Bascombe gets hold of Jigger's knife hand and twists his wrist, forcing him to a helpless position" (158). While Jigger is anything but a sympathetic character, the physical "helpless position" is simply a concretizing of the economic status the two would-be thieves have held throughout their lives. In fact, faced with the implacable hold that Bascombe has over the town, coupled with the position Mrs. Mullin occupies, Billy actually has little choice in his actions. He has been destroyed economically long before he dies physically.

Enoch Snow and Mrs. Mullin are the two characters within the confines of *Carousel* who occupy a liminal class space similar to that held by Wiley Reilly and Mary Ann. Mrs. Mullin, unlike Snow, will never make the break from lower class. She is presented as far more sympathetic than Bascombe, but it is noteworthy that neither of the bosses in this show ever sing. Even Jigger, an unrepentant and almost entirely unsympathetic thief, leads the male chorus in "Blow High, Blow Low." Mullin and Snow are not fully part of this community of working-class people, and neither seems to be part of any portion of the village; this is especially important in the songs of the populace, for it is through song that musicals tend to establish both sympathy for characters and establish their relationship(s) with those in the stage community. It is also important to note that, within the binaries of rich/poor and upper/lower class that are

²⁰ Interestingly, given the scope of Chapter Two of this dissertation, the man the pair attempt to rob in *Liliom* is Jewish. Their discussion of Jewish afterlife leads to *Liliom*'s discussion of facing God for

established, they occupy something of a middle ground, but it is central to their characters that they simply feel that by moving upwards, their lives will be better. This is disproved by Snow's loss of what humanity he possesses, and Mullin actually loses business; as the musical continues. Without Billy as her barker, her carousel attracts fewer customers.

The concept of ownership is established by the first words seen onstage (before any dialogue is uttered); "Mullin's Carousel." As is the case with Bascombe (and, as will be seen, Snow), Mrs. Mullin's morality is embroiled with capital and employment. She is less morally outraged than jealous when Billy begins flirting with Julie, but she immediately uses her position of authority to attempt to have Julie thrown off the carousel. However, it is couched in terms of community morality and economics.

"Think I want to get in trouble with the police and lose my license? . . . Lettin' my barker fool with you! Ain't you ashamed?" (95). The idea that Mrs. Mullin is herself sleeping with Billy is often advanced; there is definitely some type of jealousy attached to her response to Julie. Ethan Mordden describes her as "the widow who runs the carousel and, apparently, Billy" (*R&H* 75). Billy does not even notice Julie until his boss picks her out. The stage directions tell us that his attitude toward Julie is "one of only casual and laconic interest. He can get all the girls he wants. One is like another. This one is a cute little thing. Like hundreds of others" (94).²¹

When Mrs. Mullin fires Billy, she unconsciously echoes Bascombe's response to Julie. "You upstart! After all I done for you! . . . I won't take you back like before!" (98). The first epithet is obviously directed at a man who does not know his proper response to someone in charge, and is not properly grateful for his employment. It is

judgment.

²¹ Like the majority of characters in the musical, Billy looks upon life as consumable; this includes women.

Mrs. Mullin's appearance in Act II that unwittingly gives Billy a chance to avoid robbing Bascombe by rehiring him. She lists the benefits, which include girls, beer and finally, "a good livin'." The capper is a ring her husband left her (132).

For once, morality actually interferes with commerce; when Billy offers to work for Mrs. Mullin despite his being married, she replies "Can y' imagine how the girls'd love that? A barker who runs home to his wife every night?" (133). Not only does love come second to business, but Billy's morality will always come in second to the morality of those who run the business world. The widow ends the scene by offering Billy money; it is during her absence²² that he learns he will be a father. It is his refusal of Mullin's offer that will lead to his death.

The other businesswoman in *Carousel* is Julie's aunt, Nettie Fowler; it is with Nettie that the couple resides. Nettie owns a "spa," a New England term for a soda fountain. Nettie is very obviously part of the community. Unlike Mrs. Mullin, she donates her time and goods to the community, and unlike the other woman (or those who dare to step out of their class like Billy or Jigger), Nettie is loved, remains a part of the community, and lives through the play's end. During the preparations for the clambake, she provides free donuts and coffee to the men, despite the women's "After the way they been pesterin' and annoyin' you!" (115). Nettie is a forgiving soul who leads the women in the musical's most outspoken moment of fecundity and productiveness, "June is Bustin' Out All Over," as well as leading the company in "This Was a Real Nice Clambake." Her final song, "You'll Never Walk Alone," is offered as comfort to Julie upon Billy's death. All three songs have more to do with community than mere choral singing (although all three have that in some manner; "You'll Never Walk Alone" is

reprised by the entire company as the work's finale). "June is Bustin' Out All Over" does discuss work, but only as a way into the discussion of how the feelings spring engenders keep everyone from their assigned duties. It is Nettie's celebration of this fact that keeps her a part of the community. Her final song, the show's hymn, is an endorsement of community and hope: "Walk on, walk on, / With hope in your heart, / And you'll never walk alone" (162). This musical characterization of Nettie is important not only to set her off from the other successful businesspeople in the area;²³ it endears to the audience a woman who is mysteriously silent regarding her relationship to Billy.²⁴ Nettie's specific music aids in her characterization. Richard Rodgers is known for his popular waltzes, but except for the opening prelude, the only song in waltz time is the Nettie-led "Clambake." This, combined with the fact that she is given the musical's hymn, "You'll Never Walk Alone," gives Nettie both authority and community.

The character who does make the transition from working class to higher society is Enoch Snow.²⁵ Unlike Bascombe, whom we see before we know, we learn much about Enoch before he ever appears. In the music of Carrie and "When I Marry Mr. Snow," the character of Enoch gains a large amount of audience approval (which he will eventually lose as the show progresses and he moves into the upper class). Mordden calls him "a little tycoon-on-the-rise," rewritten from Molnar's servant "to enlarge the tale's social background" (*R&H* 79).

Carrie sings of her suitor in apt economic terms. He is "upstandin'" *because* "he

²² While getting change at Bascombe's bank, appropriately.

²³ The stage directions describing spa/home do not indicate that she is a very successful businesswoman, but she obviously cares far less for money than her community, giving away food and housing Billy and Julie.

²⁴ Ethan Mordden characterizes Nettie as "oddly neutral to the Billy-Julie romance for . . . fifteen years" (*40s* 86).

²⁵ Carrie travels with him, but it is obvious that it is Enoch who makes the change.

comes home every night in his round-bottomed boat / With a net full of herring from the sea” (101). When Enoch finally appears, he has brought Carrie flowers, although in keeping with his conservative capitalistic nature and near-obsession regarding plans for the future, he has brought her seeds rather than actual flowers. Immediately afterward, in response to Carrie’s statement of how glad she is that Enoch is more stable than Billy, Snow replies “Well, Carrie, it alw’ys seemed t’ me a man had enough to worry about, getting a good sleep o’ nights so’s to get in a good day’s work the next day, without goin’ out an’ lookin’ for any special trouble. . . . A man’s got to make plans fer his life—and then he’s got to stick to ‘em” (124). A more direct dig at Billy could not be possible.

The couple then moves into their duet, “When The Children Are Asleep.” The song begins with Snow’s solo beginning, appropriately enough, with the enumeration of his material possessions:²⁶

I own a little home,
And I sail a little boat,
And the fish I ketch I sell—
And, in a manner of speakin’,
I’m doin’ very well. (125)

Only after his possessions come “the little girl” he loves. But even then, he is not satisfied, moving on to discuss his future economic plans.

When I make enough money outa one little boat,
I’ll put all my money in another little boat.
I’ll make twic’t as much outa two little boats,
And the fust thing you know I’ll hev four little boats!
Then eight little boats,
Then a fleet of little boats!
Then a great big fleet of great big boats! . . .
[B]ringin’ in more,
And more, and more,
And more! (125).

²⁶ Ethan Mordden distinguishes the beginning of this song as Snow being “obsessed with his commercial aspirations” (40s 87).

The score supports his ambition by going ever higher and higher, with the final “more” on a climactic high A.

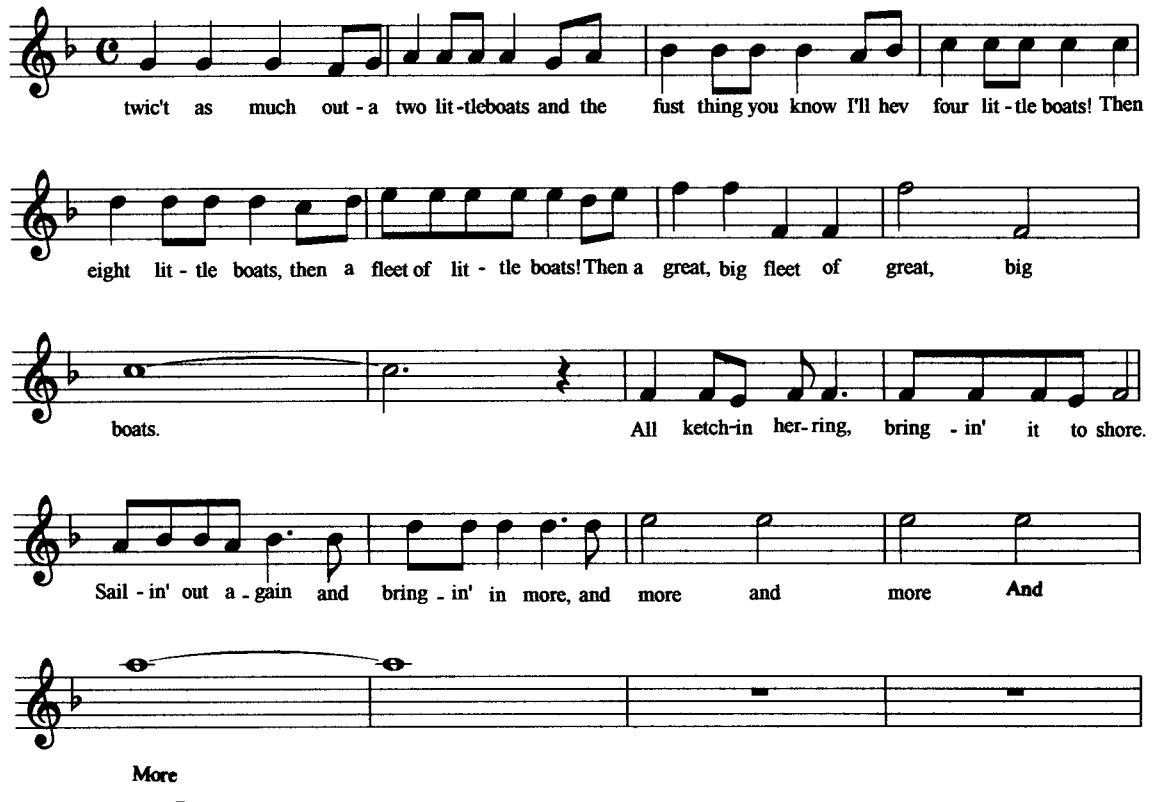


Figure 2.3: “When The Children Are Asleep,” Enoch’s Introduction.

The stage directions emphasize how this song fits into the authors’ view: “The music has become very operatic, rising in a crescendo far beyond what would ordinarily be justified by several boatloads of fish. But to this singer, boatloads are kingdom come” (125).

These specific ambitions even reflect their way onto his future family. “Carrie, I’m goin’ to get rich on sardines. I mean *we’re going t’* get rich—you and me. I mean you and me—and—all of us” (125. Emphasis Hammerstein’s). The misstatement regarding who will get rich could certainly (and often is) played as a comic mistake regarding the impending marriage. But it also could be that it truly shows Enoch as he is—*he* will get

rich. And of course, “all of us” refers to the family they will raise together; here Enoch is as conspicuous as anywhere else. The Snow family will, by musical’s end, contain nine children. With those children, “our dear little house will get bigger” (126).

The song continues, moving into “When The Children Are Asleep” proper. The song is beautiful, but like all the duets in *Carousel*, works dramatically as well as musically. Carrie originally begins her verse in a different key, with a varied melody, and with a different idea. The couple only sings together after Carrie adopts Enoch’s melody (and by extension, his way of thinking).

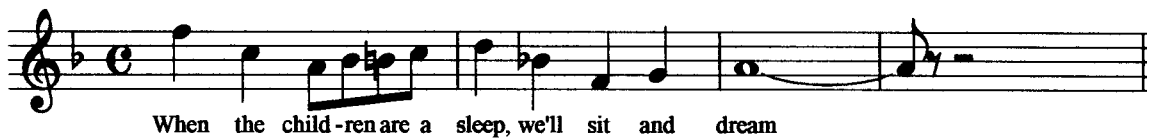


Figure 2.4: “When The Children Are Asleep:” Enoch’s Verse



Figure 2.5: “When The Children Are Asleep:” Carrie’s Verse

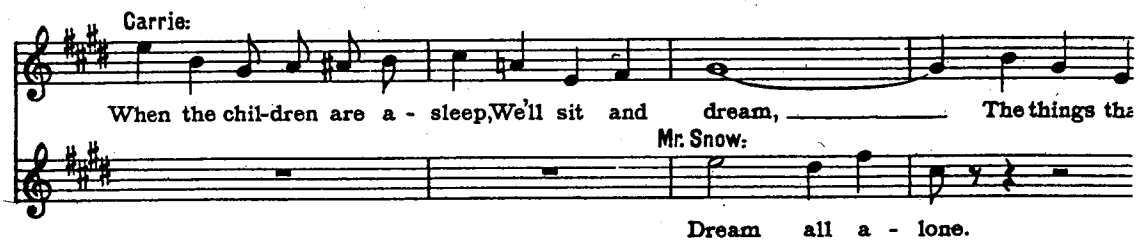


Figure 2.6: “When The Children Are Asleep:” Enoch and Carrie’s Duet.

Enoch does end the song by singing “the best dream I know / Is you” (127). The audience never actively detests Snow, and it is because he sings lines like this in the early sections of the musical.

Enoch is never particularly tolerant or concerned for others, but his move upwards provokes Carrie into noticing a difference. At one point, she sighs “I don’t know what gets into men. Enoch put on a new suit today and he was a different person” (152). In Act II, he appears during the ballet, while Louise plays on the beach with

two little ruffian boys. . . . Presently, Enoch Snow enters leading his six very well-behaved children. Louise invites them to join in her play, but, taking their cue from their father’s horrified face, they snub her. They exit with their father, all except one little horror in a big hat who remains to taunt Louise.” (168)

Enoch has arrived. Just as Mr. Bascombe is able, during the opening scene, to communicate his displeasure with his son with no words, so too is does Enoch.

The following scene between Louise and the Snow daughter who remains behind is instructive in how Enoch now conducts himself. First, the libretto simply calls the girl “Snow’s daughter.” While this is a stage convention that works easily—the character never officially appears again—the ownership involved within the nomenclature cannot be easily ignored. It is also striking that the first comment from Snow’s daughter is economically and socially related to class: “My father bought me my pretty dress. . . .

Your father was a thief” (168). bell hooks says that “money is so often used to coercively assert power over others that it can easily become an arena of conflict, setting up hierarchies that were not previously present” (150). This is as true of this girl as it is her father. While Enoch has earned enough audience in Act I to make us like him, his daughter taunts Louise with her social position—the pretty dress and the position of Billy—as well as her monetary standing: buying the dress is obviously equated with love to some degree.

Enoch’s final appearance is while Carrie tells Julie of the family’s trip to New York; Enoch forced his wife to leave a theatrical “extravaganza” because the “twelve hussies” onstage were wearing “nothin’ on their legs but tights.” Carrie goes back the next day “to see how the story came out,” and runs into Enoch (170-171). Enoch has developed a moral hold on his family similar to Bascombe’s on those in “his” town. Wealth is now coupled with morality for Enoch, as it was earlier for Bascombe. He will pay twice to see something of which he publicly disapproves, but will not let Carrie spread word of his indiscretion, even to Julie. He makes her stop singing one of the show’s songs to Julie, thus completing his transition to the show’s upper class: there is no more music to be associated with him, just as Bascombe had none.

Billy is presented from the first as a victim of class structure. He begins as a working-class man and it is his attempt to better his position in the only way he understands that actually kills him. His death is open to a number of interpretations, but all are economically or socially related. It is possible that his inability to support his

family financially contributes to his death.²⁷ Billy, like other working class heroes, borrows “the final body language of the fallen woman of mid-Victorian fiction” and “takes his rage out on himself in suicide” (Hapke 27).²⁸

Billy’s immediate response to Mrs. Mullin’s threat to keep Julie off the carousel is to bypass money entirely: “You come around all you want, see? And if y’ain’t got the price Billy Bigelow’ll treat you to a ride” (97). After Mrs. Mullin fires him, he asks Julie directly how much money she has (“forty-three cents”). The policeman tells Bascombe that Billy “makes a specialty of young things like this’n. . . . Promises to marry ‘em, then takes their money.” Julie has already removed economic threat from the situation, and underscores it by responding “I ain’t got no money,” a sentence which prompts the policeman to tell her to shut up. Again, the economics of the situation has been neatly sidestepped, which does not sit well with Bascombe or his representative, the cop.

The first question about Julie’s romantic past is also financial: “Ain’t you never had a feller you give money to?” This direct query into her financial dealings with men is softened by Billy’s prior “Say, tell me somethin’—ain’t you scared of me? I mean, after what the cop said about me takin’ money from girls” (106). Musical underscoring begins directly after the first sentence, alleviating the impact of the monetary concern. Since money has been put to rest, Billy can now discuss marriage; it is obviously an economic relationship for him, anyway. “Suppose I was to say that I’d marry you? . . . That scares you, don’t it? You’re thinkin’ what the cop said” (108).

²⁷ The equation of financial failure and loss of family (or life) holds true for a long line of musical theatre heroes, ranging from Gaylord in *Show Boat* (1927) up through *Barnum* (1980) and the present day, with *The Full Monty* (2000). I am indebted to Michael Garber at New York University for this idea.

²⁸ This is, of course, only in the stage version. The film presents his death as self-defense on the part of Bascombe.

The following duet, “If I Loved You,” contains almost the musical in miniature,²⁹ but the primary moment regarding class structure comes with Billy’s summation that “two little people— / You and I— / We don’t count at all” (109). This is said against the backdrop of the stars in the sky and is probably meant to place the couple against the enormity of the universe, but it undoubtedly echoes Billy’s position within his society. The world rewards wealth, making someone like Bascombe a “big man,” unlike these two little people. In this society, class equals wealth, but for Billy, it is a deadly equation.

Economic oppression breaks down even his marriage. Every trouble that Billy has after the first scene is blamed on his not working, including his striking Julie: “Y’see he’s unhappy ‘cause he ain’t workin’. That’s why he hit me on Monday” (199). The economic oppression breaks down their marriage. After hearing this, Carrie enumerates the reasons why Julie should leave her husband, and the very first is economic: “Don’t support you! Beats you! . . . He’s a bad ‘n” (199). While discussing the robbery with Jigger, Billy says “Money thinks I’m dead” (131). It will certainly kill him, from a Marxist point of view.

It is only with the knowledge that Julie is pregnant that Billy swings into action. Ironically, it is his joy about his impending fatherhood that deals the blows that culminate in his death. He tells both Jigger and Mrs. Mullin, neither of whom believes he can be a good father. Both have a stake in an unhappy, childless Billy: Jigger needs help during the robbery and Mrs. Mullin needs a single barker to flirt with the women at the carnival.

²⁹ Julie’s reply to Billy’s question of what she would do if she loved him is “I’d gaze absent-minded at the roof” (108). Carrie has already used this music and a near-replication of this lyric line to inform Julie that this is exactly what she is *already* doing, before she meets Billy. The song also prefigures Billy’s end: the tide is “creepin’ up on the beach like a thief, / Afraid to be caught stealin’ the land.” Julie knows exactly how Billy will leave, as well. “Off you would go in the mist of day, / Never, never to know / How I loved you.” This is exactly how Billy makes his exit after his death.

Fatherhood, as well as morality, intertwines with class structure throughout *Carousel*. The only two fathers other than Billy in *Carousel* are Bascombe and a *nouveau riche* Enoch in Act II; it may, in fact, be *Carousel*'s depiction of fatherhood and family that allows the audience to see the upper class actually operate; these two men can afford to feed their broods. Enoch's large family is thus a conspicuous show of upper-class consumption. Not only that, but in an era when child labor was common, the fact that these children obviously do not have to work puts the families squarely in the upper crust. But it is with the coming child that Billy comes near to joining the "respectable" classes with the announcement of Julie's pregnancy.

Shawn Johansen says of the period which *Carousel* covers, that

fathers both serve their children and have power over them. . . . [T]he tasks that a father fulfilled . . . can be categorized into four essential roles: provider, teacher, caregiver, and governor. The provider role meant more than just supplying the necessities of life; it also included providing the opportunities, knowledge, morals, and means necessary for successful inclusion into the ranks of the middle class" (9).

This unquestionably holds true for Billy. During his "Soliloquy," he says of his daughter, "I got to make certain that she / Won't be dragged up in slums / With a lot of bums like me" (140). As the musical proceeds, Billy will personify the American male worker's attitude toward family: "Making sure that their family is secure in a threatening world is an unending task, and one that is increasingly difficult to carry out because the environment they live in is perceived as unstable" (Lamont 19).

Billy's "Soliloquy," a justifiably famous number and the first one written for the musical, follows much of the same pattern as the scene leading into it. Billy is so exultant at the thought of a child that economic and social reality creep only gradually into the lyric. The song takes until measure 61 to proclaim "And you won't see nobody

dare to try / To boss him or toss him around! / No pot-bellied baggy-eyed bully'll boss him around!" (139). It is only after asserting his son's independence from the social strictures that weigh Billy down that he even discusses possible concrete futures for his son. The moment he realizes the baby may be a girl, he appreciates the need for both money and social position: "What could I do *for* her? A bum—with no money!" (139).

Fatherhood had become a subject of anxiety during the period covered by *Carousel*. "Between 1890 and 1915, every state in the union enacted new laws that made a husband's desertion or failure to support his wife or children a crime" (Willrich 260). So the anxiety that Billy displays is actually two-fold: it mirrors his own society, but it must also parallel that felt by returning veterans who had not seen their families in quite a while. If Billy is already criminalized by society for his inability to support his family, it does not seem much of a moral repositioning to move into robbery.

Musically, Billy's soliloquy is his first attempt to sing his own melody. During the final song that finishes the so-called "Bench Scene," he displays where he fits into the community—class-wise and otherwise. Like another famous flirt, Don Giovanni, Billy only echoes the music of those around him, never instigating his own music. In fact, much like his social standing, he owns neither his status or his music. And like his attempt to gain status, he simply grabs for melody when he decides he needs the former. Musically, the "Soliloquy" is his first attempt to sing with his own voice, his own melody. Appropriately, he is so distracted that he keeps shifting melodic (and lyric) thoughts; there are seven distinct melodic ideas embodied in this song.

Billy's final song, "The Highest Judge of All," is his final attempt to find a melody, as well as to declare his place in the universe. He succeeds most admirably here,

with a song in the traditional ABA form, and a stirring tune and lyrics. The music, much like that of “You’ll Never Walk Alone,” is a melody in which each succeeding melodic line moves slightly higher than the one before it. Each line also falls at the end, as he fails to reach the song’s melodic top (and God). He continues to repeat his attempts with each new lyric line, and eventually ends the song on a high G, which coincides with the stage action of finding he’s in God’s waiting room. Billy is, of course, fighting his own destiny. It is implied by the “Heavenly Friends” who arrive to take his soul that he will not be seeing God. “So that’s it. Just like Jigger said. ‘No supreme court for little people—just perlice magistrates’!” (sic) (163).³⁰

The first comment the Starkeeper addresses to Billy is the accusatory “You left yer wife hevin’ thet baby comin—with nothin’ fer ‘em to live on. Why’d you do that?” Billy replies, tellingly, “I couldn’t get work and I couldn’t bear to see her—“ (106). It is obviously a very confused condensation of the story, but that this is the first interchange between the two continues to reinforce what the audience knows of Billy. And true to his reputation as a sneak thief, Billy steals a star to give to Louise. The Starkeeper and one of the Heavenly Friends notice this and do nothing, destabilizing the traditional power structure associated with both heaven and the society Billy is from.

Billy gives the star to Louise as “a present,” a gesture which makes her “immediately suspicious” (174). Gifts for Louise, like Billy, have apparently often come with strings attached, with hidden payments. She is like him in her inability to accept gifts; Billy has been unable to receive either Julie’s love or Nettie’s charity easily. His final gift to his daughter is one for which there is no fee: hope and acceptance. He helps

³⁰ It is ironic that the Hytner revival cut this song. It was originally written “in-one” to cover a scene change, but given the revival’s overt preoccupation with class structure, it is a loss.

her to join in singing “You’ll Never Walk Alone” and as the show ends, Louise “moves in closer to the group,” and “the girl on her right puts her arm around her” (179). Billy has, through his encouragement, given Louise the social acceptance he never had. Louise transgresses the idea of community simply by her birth, yet she is able to forgive others. Her dream ballet consisted of a life similar to her father’s, and as he releases the idea that money must equal acceptance, so too can she embrace those around her.

While I have discussed specific songs, there is one more musical idea that recurs constantly through the score. Rodgers links his score with a “circular” accompanimental figure which occurs in many of the songs.



Figure 2.7: Circular Motive.

This music personifies the carousel as well as Julie’s weaving. It also articulates the concept of completion, with Billy himself circling back onto Earth to help his daughter with the same problem that plagued him during his life. So too will Rodgers’ grandson, Adam Guettel, work with extraordinarily similar ideas of class oppression coupled with death.

I Can Get It For You Wholesale: Class Concerns Continue

Economic and social issues changed drastically after World War II. As a result, representations of class in musical theatre changed, too. The “shared status” of many groups began to disintegrate. During the 1950s, *My Fair Lady* raised issues of class in much the same manner as its original, *Pygmalion*. Here again, class boundaries are permeable. Women all over the world, like Eliza, also began to find that crossing these borders apparently involved at least a partial surrender of one’s own personality.

By the 1960s, things were changing everywhere, and strikingly. As was foreshadowed in *Carousel*, musical stage characters found it difficult to pursue the American Dream of financial security (and a chance to join the upper classes) and still maintain their humanity. In some cases, the pursuit of that dream would lose them their lives. Perhaps it was simply a part of the 1960s discomfort with the status quo, but characters such as Harry Bogen (*I Can Get It For You Wholesale* [1962]) and Sammy Glick (*What Makes Sammy Run?* [1964]) lost the women they loved while pursuing financial and social success. Other musicals of the era portrayed these same types of businesspeople but allowed for happier endings as they realized those they loved were more important than success. A short list would include such works as *The Unsinkable Molly Brown* (1960), *How Now, Dow Jones* (1967), and *Promises, Promises* (1968). The major exception to the success/romance binary is 1967’s *How To Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*, wherein J. Pierpont Finch becomes CEO of the World Wide Wicket Company and gains the woman of his dreams; however, the work only allows this ending because it is a sharply satirical piece. *Hair* (1969) ends with the protagonist accepting the worldview of those in charge and, it is strongly implied, dying in Vietnam.

Musicals after this one kept the criticism of the American Dream securely in focus, in works such as *Follies* (1971) and *Chicago* (1975). By the 1990s, the critical scrutinies were part of the tradition.

The late 1990s proved a difficult economic time for America. There was good news on the economic front: blue-collar wages grew, and the percentage of adults in full-time employment rose. The rest of the picture more than counterbalances these cheery tidbits of news, however. During this same time period, the poverty rate remained quite high, just one-tenth of a percentage point lower than the figure for a decade earlier. Hours worked by middle-class families rose approximately six full weeks a year over the earlier eras studied. Fewer and fewer businesses were paying for health insurance, and the money paid in pensions fell, as well, while the typical CEO of a large company “earned 107 times more than the typical worker. This . . . was almost double the ratio” from 1989 (Mishel, Bernstein & Schmitt n.p.). In other words, even as prosperity seemed to brighten the horizon, problems rose faster than the good news. A 1995 article in *The Economist* points out that by the 1990s, workers became increasingly angry about layoffs, downsizing, and declining real wages (“Getting Dues” 2).

Meanwhile, America continues to remain “a society in which class matters. Children who grow up in privileged families are more likely to become highly paid professionals, for example, than are children raised in more disadvantaged households.” Even though there are improvements in this area over past generations, the “failure of the economy to grow as rapidly as in the past” and “the slowing of economic growth and the related stagnation of occupational prospects have almost offset” any gains that have been made (McMurrer & Sawhill 3). Even those authorities who believe in social and

economic mobility admit that movement upward was far more difficult in this time than was the far more commonplace “downward mobility” (Perrucci and Wysong 49). Such was the economic and social climate into which *Floyd Collins* (1996) was born.

“I Can See So Far:” *Floyd Collins* and the Underclass

In the last days of January, 1925, a thirty-seven-year-old caver³¹ named Floyd Collins descended into a hole in the ground on his neighbor’s property and became trapped by a small rock that fell onto his foot. Rescue efforts came to naught, but his plight captured the interest of the nation, and he became the object of America’s first media circus. In much the same manner as Leo Frank’s trial (see Chapter 3), the chronicle of Floyd Collins caught the popular imagination, resulting, like the Frank history, in a plethora of retellings: “following the tragedy in 1925, songs, poems, movies, novels, articles, books, and television specials dealt with the affair” (Murray & Brucker 246). The earliest, aside from the media accounts during Collins’ life, was probably the song “The Death of Floyd Collins.” Written by Andrew B. Jenkins in the spring of 1925 very shortly after the actual events, the song was recorded by Vernon Dalhart, popularly accorded the rank of the first country and western recording star.³²

Floyd Collins was originally commissioned by The American Music Theatre Festival, which produced the world premiere in 1994. On March 3, 1996, the work opened at Playwrights Horizons. The musical, which has been called a “chamber opera” by more than one critic, contained lyrics and music by Adam Guettel, the third in a

³¹ At this point in history “caver” has replaced “spelunker” as the more acceptable term, the latter having come to connote an amateur cave explorer.

³² See Appendix for this lyric.

lineage of musical theatre creators that includes his grandfather, Richard Rodgers, and his mother, Mary Rodgers.³³ Great notice has been taken since of Guettel's score.

Guettel and Landau, like Rodgers and Hammerstein before them, present a musical with characters who believe that money (or power) is the answer to the problems of class; these are Lee and Carmichael. Alongside them are the three Collins children, who follow dreams of their own, knowing that if they stay where they are, they will never change their station. *Floyd Collins* states quite decisively that changes in station are impossible within the system as it exists.

The story follows historical fact closely, with only a few changes for dramatic requirements, primarily combining the character of Carmichael with other outsiders who stepped in to try and help. In the appropriately named Barren County, Kentucky, Floyd Collins, hoping to find a great cave to take business away from Kentucky's famed Mammoth Cave, enters a sinkhole on his neighbor Bee Doyle's farm. Just as he has found an enormous cave that seems to have potential for commercial purposes, he becomes trapped when a small rock is dislodged from the top of a tunnel and catches his foot. During the course of the musical, we meet Floyd's youngest brother, Homer and his sister, Nellie, who has recently returned from a stay at a nearby asylum. Floyd's father, Lee, has remarried a caver widow, known as Miss Jane to her stepchildren. A newspaper reporter, "Skeets" Miller³⁴, is one of the only people small enough to get very close to Floyd; he moves quickly from being an objective reporter to one of the spearheads of the rescue operation. Eventually the rescuers reach Floyd, but too late; he dies in the cave

³³ Guettel borrows more than one page from his grandfather in his score for *Floyd Collins*. Like "Oh, What a Beautiful Morning," Floyd's "The Call" is a hymn to the land (or what's under it). Like *Oklahoma!* and other Rodgers shows, *Floyd Collins* features an extended "dream ballet."

³⁴ From "Mosquito," referring to his small stature.

after a couple of collapses make it impossible for rescuers to get to him in time. The actions aboveground betray class warfare of much the same type depicted by Oscar Hammerstein and Guettel's grandfather, Richard Rodgers, in *Carousel*.

Even those reviewers who failed to grasp the full import of the musical noted that portions of the show were definitely about conflict between people of different status. Ben Brantley, who had nothing but praise for the music, believed that many of the musical's best elements were "eclipsed by the weary myth of the goodness of the common folk, here pitted against the corrupting ways of big-city visitors. (The businessman who disastrously takes over the rescue operations . . . might as well be named Military Industrial Complex.)" (Brantley). Michael Feingold, who missed most of the best points of the work except for the score, mentioned this same take on Carmichael. "Their villain, insofar as they have one, is the engineer who supervises the rescue operation, depicted as a bullying capitalist pig" (Feingold).

Floyd Collins is a tightly-constructed and extremely well-written musical which utilizes images (visual, verbal, and musical) that recur and cross-cut throughout the work. "The Ballad of Floyd Collins," an obvious nod to the Dalhart song, begins the piece. Much as the chorus of *Romeo and Juliet* tells the audience most, but not all, of the thread of the play to follow, so too does "The Ballad of Floyd Collins."³⁵ As lights come up slowly on various cast members, they sing of Floyd. The final lines are most appropriate for a discussion of monetary and social class: "Went lookin' fer his fortune under the ground, / Sure enough, his fortune is what he found" (1). The abundance of references within just this couplet is remarkable. "Fortune" means destiny as well as treasure, and Floyd found both. In fact, had Floyd not been trapped, it is quite likely that few would

know his name today. The fact that “treasure” is traditionally found underground completes the irony, as well as the chain of reference.

As is the case with Harrigan and Hammerstein, which of Guettel’s characters are allowed to sing is important not only to their characterization and their inclusion in the community, but to the sympathy of their portrayals. The outsiders to the community include Carmichael, who immediately takes over the rescue operation as a privilege of his position in his own community. Floyd’s brother, Homer, politely contradicts Carmichael’s instantaneous assessment of the situation: “Excuse me, sir – this hill ain’t made for shaftin’.” Carmichael tells him that his corporation, the Kentucky Rock Asphalt Company, is footing the bill. “It’s not really up to you, now is it, son?” (24). Part of this reply stems from the fact that Lee, the boys’ father, has given the outsider permission to proceed as he sees fit. However, the condescension is palpable.

Except for Lee, who is eventually accused by Homer of doing everything he can to make money at the site of his son’s entrapment, the rest of the community does not particularly trust or like Carmichael. He has to continually take stronger and stronger action in order to get the natives to follow his orders. He asks early on, “are you men with me?,” as he obviously knows that they are, at best, suspicious of him. Toward the end of the musical, he finally whirls on Homer, his primary nemesis throughout, “as if he might chew him alive.” He tells him “You know what, Collins, I’ve had just about enough of your loud mouth blabberin’. Case you ain’t heard the news, part-ner, I am now in full command of the rescue operation” (73). His assumption of authority is complete, including a sarcastic “part-ner” that is emphasized as such in the libretto; it completes the job of putting Homer in his place.

³⁵ A version similar to, but musically and lyrically distinct from, Jenkins’ version.

Carmichael's problematic relationship with the local men is hindered greatly by the fact that he consistently does the wrong thing in each step of Floyd's rescue. Each time, he is forced to fall back on the plan of action suggested by the local community, but while he suffers these as setbacks, he never acknowledges his error or the worth of the community around him. In fact, when Homer tells him that it was probably his work that caused the open passageway to collapse, he answers heatedly, "I am the only one 'round here doing anything to get your brother out – (to the press) – for the record" (74). This is, in fact, close to the truth, but only because he has ordered everyone else away from the passage where Floyd lies.

Despite these difficulties with the locals, Carmichael tells Homer that "I'll be determining the order around here, son" (29); he actually moves Homer off the site at one point, telling him "We're digging my shaft. I don't need you anymore" (72). Even the hole—an actual absence of the material property on Doyle's farm—is commandeered as his own.

Part, if not all, of Carmichael's motivation is based in his company status. Shortly after his entrance, Homer tells the other locals "I just read in the paper that this Carmichael fella is up for a promotion at his company. Now that starts 'splainin' some of his behavior around here." Immediately upon the heels of this information, the audience sees Carmichael telling a reporter, "In all modesty, I think it's still up to me to get Collins out. Me and . . . (A plug.) . . . the men of the Kentucky Rock and Asphalt Company. Thank you" (54). The company status is just a portion of his power, however. "The privileged class is able to maintain its position of advantage because its members control the jobs and incomes of other Americans. They also control the mass media" (Perrucci

and Wysong 83). Not only has Carmichael repeatedly controlled who is allowed to help in the rescue (and in what capacity), but he is able to turn the live radio broadcast into a commercial for his company.

As befits what Homer terms an “outlander,” Carmichael has no music at all. An outsider who nearly makes the transition to insider is Skeets Miller, the reporter who eventually won a Pulitzer Prize for his reporting on Collins’ story. Miller does not sing, either, but, appropriately for this type of transitional figure, music figures heavily in Miller’s character.³⁶ He begins by making a good impression on Homer (and thereby, the audience) when, in response to Homer’s exhausted suggestion that instead of asking questions, Miller should simply go below and see Floyd for himself. He does, which raises a tired smile from Homer.

The piece “I Landed On Him” appears as Miller “explodes out of the cave, stumbling and covered in mud from head to foot. He sinks to the ground and lowers his head between his knees” (26). He is characterized as delivering this piece “fast, panicked, in the middle of reliving it” (26). This is perhaps one reason he does not sing; it is rather a spoken piece to a dissonant and disturbing accompaniment. Song usually implies a degree of control that Miller simply does not possess at this moment.

I landed on him!
That thing!
Horrible! Wet . . .
Something, jelly or worms, or something . . .
My hand on him! (26)

Another use of music regarding Miller comes as he interviews Floyd in the cave. As conversation turns personal, Miller admits to Floyd that “until I got this job a couple

³⁶ It is also appropriate that Miller never lose himself in song; he must remain somewhat objective while reporting on the events around him. Song would allow him a subjective quality for the audience.

months ago, my great aspiration was always to be – now don’t laugh, Floyd – a baritone on the operatic stage” (36). It is a moment of intimacy between the two men, but it is also indicative of Miller’s near-acceptance by the community that he has come close to being a singer, and that he comes close to singing during *Floyd Collins*. Miller is, of course, the only reporter who does not exaggerate the story to sell papers; he actually apologizes to Floyd as events move beyond his control: “Forgive me . . . for turning you into a story” (85).

The other major group of outsiders is a trio of reporters who actually do sing. Their music, however, is conspicuously unlike that sung by the rest of the cast. It is during this one song, “Is That Remarkable?,” that Guettel abandons the bluegrass source of his score and moves into a smooth, jazzy sound that emphasizes the condescension with which the reporters behold the people on whom they report. The performance instructions for the song indicate “Swing.”

Swing (♩ = ♪)

Figure 2.8: “Is That Remarkable?” Rhythmic Direction

In other words, just as these men will alter the facts to suit their needs, so too will they modify even their music. The speed of the song, the “swing” and jazzy feel serve to illustrate musically the bemused outsiders’ patronizing ideas concerning the people about whom they write. These city dwellers have no time for responses from anyone, nor do they even care to check the veracity of their stories. They are not interested in these people as people, but as stories through whom to sell more papers. In fact, their headlines refer to Floyd as “Cave Man,” which operates on a simpler level than mere identification: that is exactly how these reporters feel about these people, as that far

removed from themselves. The almost countless newspapers to whom they report is in part the creators' method for overcoming the small number in the cast, but it also serves to illustrate how little they care about the people on whom they are reporting. There is no difference between place, readers, and paper.

The song's title borrows a page from other great lyricists and changes meaning as it proceeds. It begins as the question the men ask their papers: is this story remarkable enough for their readers? It moves, however, into a classist view of the Kentucky natives as it becomes a commentary on the people themselves. It is with the third section, in which they report on the Collins family, that this becomes most apparent. The following lyric is based heavily on real headlines (see Murray and Brucker). The portions of the following excerpt in regular typeface are the segments sung by reporters to their newspapers as they file the stories. The portions in italics are the spoken lines other reporters use to elaborate to their own papers on these same stories.

The picture of the weathered family is touching.
The picture of the old weathered farmer and his bent backwoods wife is a touching one, period.
A virginal and colorful example of the life
The virginal sister is a colorful example of the folkways and eccentricities of the hillbilly life, period.
(Spoken in rhythm) Remarkably enough, comma,
Although they live such simple lives, comma,
The Collins family manages to own a car
And even wear shoes. (58-59).

"The Carnival" is the piece surrounding the frenzy above ground at its peak. The music begins more or less tunefully, but becomes more and more dissonant, harsh, and expressionistic, as does the action corresponding to it. The title of this section seems to me extremely telling. It not only indicates the frenzy surrounding the events, but it indicates both the grotesquerie and the marketing of Floyd, just as carnivals do to their

star attractions. A radio reporter interviews a man who has set up a kitchen; “we sold out at noon today” (61). Ironically, of course, the marketing is very much the same that Floyd envisioned for his cave; it is the cave’s inhabitant that merits the commercialization and fame, rather than the cave itself. The hawkers at the Carnival are also much as Floyd had imagined his own promotions: balloons appear, and of course, the lanterns and rope that he dreamt of are part of the rescue attempt. The stage directions introducing this section disclose the authors’ intent: “‘The Carnival’ is a highly expressionistic dance of the circus at Sand Cave from, what will turn out to be, Floyd’s point of view. It portrays the frenzy and the energy of the Crowd at the site. . . . They are engaged in all methods of profiteering and partying. They dance on Floyd’s grave” (60). It is during this scene that Lee, Floyd’s father—as well as Bee Doyle, on whose land the cave is located—both begin to make money from Floyd’s predicament.

Lee is the most supportive of all the local Kentuckians of the hegemonic class structure, which will end in his losing some audience sympathy. He will not lose it all; as a member of the community, he sings a beautiful song with his wife, “Heart An’ Hand,” and will be given a motivation for his sometime callousness by Homer at the show’s end.

Lee grows fully angry with only two people during the course of the musical. He is obviously upset with Homer when his son mentions leaving the area. The other example is more suggestive of Lee’s concept of class structure. Carmichael has his full support, but a visiting doctor, Dr. Hazlett, incurs Lee’s wrath when he tells him that he cannot go under and help get Floyd out. Even when Lee offers the doctor money, he continues adamant in his refusal: “First of all, no one can get in over him. But even if we could operate, we’d have to include the femur, and the loss of blood would be

substantial . . . perhaps deadly” (41). Lee replies, “(Angered) You tellin’ me you can’t do it?” and ends by raising his offer to five hundred dollars. Money and those he is supposed to be able to trust have both failed him, hence his anger. It is made even worse because he has raised the amount with no resultant change.

Lee is introduced as part of an ensemble number entitled “Where a Man Belongs.”³⁷ While this is ostensibly about remaining above the earth, it concerns class structure—and knowing one’s place—far more than not.

Standin’ on your own two feet,
Strivin’ to make somethin’ grow,
Somethin’ that’ll come to somethin’.
That’s where a man belongs. . . .
It’s clear as the sky above
Where a man belongs,
Where a man belongs. (10).

The song comes directly on the heels of Lee shushing Nellie when she tells the group of Kentucky men that Homer is not yet there because he has “gone to buy an automobile;” it is obvious that Lee does not approve of his children stepping out of their assigned roles in life. Lee also becomes very angry toward the end when Homer tells him he is leaving. “Where a man belongs” is helping his family—particularly Lee. In actuality, given the unhappiness the two situations combine to cause him, Lee is obviously angry not so much at Homer’s outlay of money, but that it is such a large one, not to mention the implication of Homer’s leaving.

During the Carnival section, Lee takes his cue from the other vendors and begins his spiel with “here’s a picture of my boy Floyd – see? Only a dollar even.” He eventually moves to selling what his wife terms a worthless rock as “Floyd Collins

³⁷ This song has officially replaced one from the original production (which is reflected on the recording), “‘Tween a Rock and a Hard Place.”

onyx!” (63). As Lee’s fight with Homer begins, the father is picking up discarded soda bottles, muttering the count up to twenty (“a nickel”) and starting over again. Homer tells his father that he is leaving the area after the current difficulty is concluded. Lee replies that Homer is going to hell. “An’ yer goin’ to heaven, makin’ a buck off your own flesh and blood?” Lee’s final response is that “I’m-a puttin’ food in that mouth, an’ wood in the stove – runnin’ the farm like a man!” (80).³⁸ During this scene, the authors raise the stakes even further. Doyle, sitting drunkenly on the ground, surveys the damage the crowds have done to his farm and “in drunken memory, as a child,” says “Yes sir, Papa, I swear I’ll take care of our farm” (77). What little he owns is being ruined by callous visitors, indifferent to a poorer man’s needs.

There are two reasons why, even after Lee knocks Homer to the ground, he does not lose all audience sympathy. The first, as mentioned above, is the exquisitely beautiful duet he sings with his wife.³⁹ The second is that Homer’s line which actually provokes the punch is Homer’s lashing out at his father. “Tain’t our fault Mama died! . . . An’ tain’t our fault neither that you died with ‘er!” (80).

All three of the Collins children portrayed in the musical are attempting to leave home in some way. Nellie spends portions of her youth in an institution and simply does not care much for her family’s way of doing things. She is permitted more leniency in this regard because she is considered emotionally fragile (though she is shown, as part of a long line of dramatic characters, as having a stronger bond to both her brother and

³⁸ The grotesquerie and irony of this scene extend even further when one realizes that, according to Murray and Brucker, the Collins family was comparatively well off for this region.

³⁹ Although interestingly, even here Lee sings of the family’s physical possessions while Miss Jane sings of being a family.

things unseen than the other characters).⁴⁰ Homer presumably does escape, although the audience does not see him do so. Particularly in the case of the two males, it seems an attempt to escape an oppressive atmosphere, but both men obviously have dreams of going beyond the limits their father has placed on them, limits that are placed on their social standing, as well. Homer and Floyd both aspire to greater things, and Lee is as much what keeps them from that as anything else. It is part of the musical's vision that just as they remove one blockage, another one appears (Floyd's physical entrapment).

Homer is the character most in transition within *Floyd Collins*. He has obviously been both making and saving money; the first time we hear of him is when Nellie tells the assemblage that "Homer's been savin' seven years to buy an automobile and take us ridin'" (9). Upon his entrance, the stage directions inform us that "he is wearing city clothes," putting him immediately at odds with his family and neighbors, with no words spoken.

Just as he pushes the boundaries imposed upon him by birth, Homer also tests the restrictions imposed upon him by others during the course of the musical. Immediately upon his arrival, he attempts to take a flask of moonshine down to his brother, who is cold. Lee forbids him to do so, asking, "You testin' my limits, boy?" as Homer "considers Lee's warning" and then "darts into the cave," with the whiskey. His attitude toward his father is summed up by a short speech while he is endeavoring to clear the debris covering Floyd. "Hell with Pa if he don't want us enjoyin' life none!" (19). Homer will chafe at any outside confines that keep him from taking care of his brother, particularly those placed upon him by outsiders. The irony is that Homer is the one

⁴⁰ It is also hard to escape the conclusion that she is allowed more leniency because she is a woman. This world is operated by men.

offspring who intends to leave this area. Hence, the idea of class structure comes into play again: it is those who consider themselves (or are considered by others) more important than Homer who will raise his ire. Class is not necessarily power, but it definitely bestows it.

Carmichael is the greatest example of this. Homer is the only (vocal) exception to the general acceptance of Carmichael as the new leader. Homer's bitterness toward the man bursts through during the song "Git Comfortable," a song addressed to the by-now leader of the rescue operation, promptly after he has completely removed Homer from the operation.

Git comfortable, outlander,
Strut and stomp aroun',
Act like you was born right here,
Sprouted outta the groun'.
These hill'll take ya in, heck! –
You harness-pullin' fool shaft-diggin'
Outlander speck of fly shit on my boot,
City slickin' suit. (75).

Shortly before this song, Carmichael has just given a short press conference and then, finishing, speaks to the local men. "All right, gentlemen . . ." Homer replies under his breath, "I don't see no gentlemen roun' here" (54). Homer knows full well what Carmichael thinks of the group, and resents it far more openly than the others do.

Floyd himself carries the bulk of the show. He has tried to escape his father and his station in life by going underground; Floyd wants to discover a cave to improve not only his, but his family's, lot in life, as he "No more plowin' a hard-scrabble field" (2). There is more to it than simple monetary success, however. He thinks of his father, too, but as much because he wants to prove himself as because he wants Lee to have a better life:

So Papa, so you see,
I ain't a crazy cavin' fool, you see!
I always promised to do you right, . . .
You see, I'll set you up on a valley farm
Where you kin nap under apple trees.
Put up your feet
Instead of kickin' my ass! (3).

There is more to it than simply a better financial situation, however. It is not just that “by the time I get home tonight / All our money worries will be gone,” but that “we will be dreamin’ on” (2). Even as he wishes to set his father up in comfort, he also wants to impress him, much as Carmichael actually does. “Oh, papa! You’re son’s a bi’nessman now! / A so and so! A muck-a-muck! / A real wheeler-dealer! / Gonna do the family proud” (2). Even Floyd’s first song, “The Call” is not only about his calling out to hear the echoes,⁴¹ but about the call he hears to go caving: “It could be glory callin’ / Callin’ me” (2).

Floyd engages audience sympathy immediately, during his first song. To begin with, he illustrates that he genuinely loves what he does, and he wants to share it with others. He sees the “great Sand Cave” as a “kingdom,” but his plans are that his “kingdom is open! / It will amaze and astound” (3). The images of a kingdom are almost certainly not coincidental. Both Floyd’s and Nellie’s views of the caves suggest fairy tales. Floyd’s castle would be his cave, as his sister suggests in “Through the Mountain:”

I’m a-walk you through the mountain . . .
Through the great halls you dream of. . .
You kin take me on a tour
Of the emerald towers,
To the spires of sapphires
An’ waterfalls of crystal. (71)

⁴¹ When he does find the great cave he has been seeking, he does so by singing what amounts to a choral piece between himself and his echoes. It is the first of many startlingly original and extraordinarily beautiful moments in the score.

When he finds the giant cave, his sense of awe is conveyed effectively through both music and lyric. The accompaniment stops almost entirely as a breathless Floyd sings

There ain't never been another man in here . . .
No Indians, no thrill seekers,
No damn crazy cavin' fools!
Nobody, nothing' til I found 'er.
God showed her to me first! . . .
(He closes his eyes and basks in the feeling of space around him.) (5)

Throughout the musical, Floyd's hopes for "a ticket office / And a curio shop/ And refreshment stand open seven days a week" recur as a memory of the relative modesty of his actual dreams for his own financial future. During "The Dream" sequence, wherein he imagines he is free⁴² before dying, we hear this quatrain one last time. We also see the cave as he has imagined it, with white balloons (no doubt representing the light he no longer sees) and forgiveness. After joking and greeting his friends, the reporters, and Miller, "He meets Carmichael. Then the Collins Family comes together, holding each other in a glorious, loving family portrait" (89). There is an equality between them all that is missing from the true picture.

His final onstage moments are during the song "How Glory Goes."⁴³ The song is comprised primarily of questions regarding what awaits him after death. There are no more dreams of fairy-tale splendor, which is significant when one realizes that so much traditional religious iconography includes the very items Floyd used to describe his own "kingdom:" gold and other precious metals. The images he depicts in this song are

⁴² Notably, both times he imagines he is free, during this number and earlier, during "The Riddle Song," it is one of his siblings—both of whom have dreams other than those of their father—who "frees" him.

⁴³ The title is another that works to change meaning as the song progresses. It is not only about how the afterlife (i.e., "glory") functions, but also conveys how Floyd's own dreams of glory are now fading as he dies.

concrete and very simple: the smell of baking bread and his mother holding him in her arms.⁴⁴

Any actor portraying Floyd has a daunting task: he must portray a man who spends the majority of the musical trapped in one position. In fact, it is not only Floyd's rescue, but his story and even his body that become a site of contestation between his working-class community and the upper class characters, all represented as outsiders. On top of this, the actor has to sing brilliant, complex, and challenging music. It is, in fact, this music that gives Floyd his stature and a dignity unavailable to other, upper-class characters. It begins during his first song, "The Call." John Guare, who provided liner notes for the cast album, had this to say about this moment in the musical. During the scene where Floyd descends to find his cave,

Listen to the joyous duets he sings with his own echoes as he descends lower and lower and more triumphantly into the bowels of the earth. Guettel's music is filled with the American bravura of optimism, the democracy of get up and go, the taste of America there for each and everyone of us, to revel in, to snatch up in the big break waiting just around the corner. (Guare, n.p.)

This music gives these inarticulate people a nobility it is difficult to match—or even imagine being possible—non-musically. Ben Brantley in the *New York Times* said that "Mr. Guettel establishes himself as a young composer of strength and sophistication, weaving strands from the Americana of Copland and the uneasy dissonance of Sondheim" (Brantley). The president of Rodgers and Hammerstein Productions, Ted Chapin, recalled that the first time he saw Guettel's musical, "Adam's ability to link familiar musical motifs with modern musical thinking was unlike anything I'd ever experienced" (qtd in "Welcoming Adam Guettel" n.p.).

⁴⁴ As is the case with Billy in *Carousel*, Floyd finds redemption only in death.

Ironically, the music may be slightly too sophisticated for most audiences.

Though of course, a country idiom pervades “Floyd Collins” music, the score has something much more serious in mind: the bluegrass and western motifs are merely punctuations or stylistic springboards for more complex musical forms that have their antecedents in the likes of Bartok, Janacek, and Stravinsky. . . . Though there are, again, flashes that tell a listener, on first hearing, that parts of the score are intensely melodic, Guettel does an awful lot to camouflage that, with deliberately perverse harmonies and accompaniment figures that are relentlessly uncompromising in their intricacy. Guettel’s music demands that the listener rise to its level . . . but it doesn’t allow time for a learning curve. (Spencer).

This sophistication allows for a hugely dramatic use of Guettel’s music. For example, what happens in “The Call” is that the verses repeat melodically, but the accompaniment continually rearranges and reidentifies itself on each repetition of the vocal line(s). This does not allow for the easy familiarity of many other composers’ works. It also acts to illustrate the onstage action: as Floyd continues his journey, so does the music, both reaching for a resolution and cadential ending. And just as other composers do,⁴⁵ Guettel’s most obvert dissonances are reserved for describing highly dramatic moments, such as Miller’s “I Landed On Him” and the portion of “The Dream” where Floyd realizes he is not really free. The discordant harmonies allow Guettel a musical shorthand, permitting the audience to understand what is being said on an emotional level. To Guettel, “harmony is just a way of creating emotional syntax in songwriting or in music making, or in storytelling with music. . . . Harmony as an emotional tool, I think, is predominantly a tonal thing” (qtd. in DeFoe n.p.).

These dissonances not only subvert the traditional “Broadway sound,” but it is exactly the “high art” level of this music that ennobles Floyd and allows an upper-class

⁴⁵ Examples include Jason Robert Brown (see Chapter 2) and Guettel’s own grandfather, Richard Rodgers (as in the opening chords of “The *Carousel* Waltz”).

audience to establish a link with a character with whom they might never otherwise engage. As Pierre Bourdieu says, “A work of art has meaning and interest only for someone who possesses the cultural competence, that is, the code, into which it is encoded” (2). Paradoxically, the primary audience for this music sung by farming-class characters consists of highly educated listeners. Part of this is due to the fact that only upper-class—and presumably educated—individuals are able to afford to attend the theatre these days. But this gap between audience and subject matter has a long history. Upper-class Berlin audiences took *The Threepenny Opera* (1928) to their hearts without necessarily fully comprehending the message inherent against them within the text. Doubtless many audience members for *Floyd Collins* react in much the same manner, enjoying the music and story without necessarily comprehending that their own backgrounds are being critiqued.

Several reviewers, including Brantley and Feingold, have noted that the lyrics are simplistic and sentimental; this constant critical refrain seems to bring their own classist assumptions to the fore. Of course these characters do not sing Sondheim-type lyrics; they are simple, uneducated, and unsophisticated characters. What elevates their onstage positions into a nobility is not just some ill-defined innate goodness, but music which many classical composers would be proud to have written.

Finally, while some theatre reviewers have noted that they find little focus to the story, when viewed through a class lens, the entire musical takes on a focus unavailable to it otherwise. I submit that there are three specific images which take their power from this lens. The first is when Carmichael attempts to pull Floyd out using a harness. Floyd is put in so much pain by this action that he actually screams for them to stop, that they

are literally pulling him in two. His attempts to move upward from the class his birth placed him in is perhaps responsible for this. The second specific image comes from the manner in which the story is staged, with Floyd belowground and others literally walking above him. While at the beginning, these people are his friends, the locals are soon pushed off to the side by the visitors, all of whom have the money and time to either make more money or simply give up what they do and visit the site.

The third moment occurs during a quiet scene in which Miller is interviewing Floyd. Floyd, unused to talking about himself, casts about for a subject to speak of instead. He believes that “all these caves ‘round here are all connected to each other . . . somehow, down thar, where we cain’t yet see it . . . everythin’ . . . is jest part of one giant . . . uh . . . “ It is Miller who provides the word that Floyd finds acceptable. “System” (35). This is based on fact; Floyd actually did believe that all the caves in the area were connected at some level. However, the idea works to explain the authors’ intentions, as well, tending toward the word that is not mentioned overtly during the course of *Floyd Collins*: socialism. At some point, people are responsible to each other, as the musical demonstrates with its depictions of Homer working to save his brother at any cost while Carmichael plugs his company and seeks promotion. It is, in fact, this set of values that takes their very place of contestation as Floyd’s body. It is the liminal characters, those between classes, who want to set him free to have power over his own body. The others, his father and Carmichael, believe his body is theirs for (economic) exploitation in a Marxist manner.

Conclusion

Michael Denning has written that “work itself resists representation” (244). This may be true, to some extent. Musicals concerning upper-class characters tend to avoid such representation even in absentia. Musicals such as *Working* (1976) which have given a strong representation to blue-collar workers, still show very little of their actual work. However, the three musicals examined in this chapter do show these men at work: audiences see Reilly (and other tradesmen) conducting business; they see Billy as a barker, and Floyd explores the cave during his first song. In fact, music plays a huge role in each man’s representations of work: Reilly sings of what he does; the opening of *Carousel* begins with a musical depiction of Billy’s job; and Floyd uses his music to aid in cave exploration.

Education is considered by many authorities to be a central issue of class structure, upholding the hegemonic construction yet allowing for the most permeability within such an arrangement. “Education was a central factor in the formation of classes. Economists, from Adam Smith through Marshall, saw the typical worker as an unrefined brute. . . . Education, according to Smith and many of his followers, would somehow refine the working class” (Perelman 56). None of the three male leads is well-educated, although interestingly, none of the three musicals portrays highly educated people as part of the upper classes, either. The difference in language is demonstrable. All three men have the accents that mark them as uneducated people. Reilly has an Irish accent, and “the most talked-about aspect of the production was Harrigan’s unveiling in it of a type of low-life character novel to the stage—the Tough Girl.” Her entrance and her opening lines, “Say, Reilly,” were delivered in a tough, working-class accent and earned her a

thunderous ovation before the scene was even over (Kahn 274-5).⁴⁶ Language is such a matter of class, however, that an entire musical is built around this premise as part of its examination of class structure: *My Fair Lady*.

In all three works, class is shown to be something inherent within a person, whether the class system is immutable or not. Reilly is shown from the first as kind and devoted to others; Billy is portrayed as worthy of Julie's love, as well as heaven and a second chance; and Floyd, too, is shown as heaven-bound. The difference between the first work and the latter two is obvious: it is no longer possible to achieve a "melting pot" status in the United States. Only through death can the latter two men leave their existing classist conditions.

"Power is the determining force that causes some people to get less and some more of whatever is considerable in a social world" (Lemert 6). None of the three men has much power, although Reilly eventually achieves some. In fact, each successive character is portrayed as having *less* power than the man before him, until Floyd is literally immobilized. However, the musicals give each of them a great *emotional* power, particularly Billy and Floyd, making them unique and individual persons for the audience. Murray and Brucker comment in their account of Floyd Collins that, "at a time when the average American was known only by his dogtag number on the battlefield, felt like a stranger on the streets of his own burgeoning city, and was losing his identity in the industrial mass-production system, Floyd Collins remained an *individual* to the very end" (emph. theirs) (245). This holds true for all these men. The musicals premiered during

⁴⁶ In fact, so rapturous was her reception that Harrigan realized immediately she would have to put in another appearance. The story is almost legendary of how Annie Harrigan and a friend stripped off their opening night jewelry to allow the young woman to appear during the ball in Act III, despite the illogic of her character being there.

times of great unrest and social change: *Reilly* during America's greatest influx of immigrants, *Carousel* during World War II, and *Floyd Collins* as the century ended during difficult economic times.

What John Guare wrote in the CD liner notes for *Floyd Collins* holds true for all three men and the musicals which surround them. "Guettel and Landau have dramatized the paradox of what it's like to live in the most beautiful country in the world and at the same time be on the edge of an abyss that separates you from ever getting there" (n.p.). The (mainly) middle-class audiences of these musicals—more so with each successive work—must acknowledge that uncrossable void, even if only for the duration of the works themselves.

Oh, the Protestants hate the Catholics,
And the Catholics hate the Protestants,
And the Hindus hate the Moslems,
And everybody hates the Jews."
"National Brotherhood Week" -- *Tomfoolery* (Tom Lehrer)

CHAPTER III

"I KNOW WE ARE YOUR CHOSEN PEOPLE. BUT ONCE IN A WHILE, COULDN'T YOU CHOOSE SOMEONE ELSE?:" JEWS ON THE AMERICAN MUSICAL STAGE

"What is a Jew?" is the question that Ellen Schiff adopts at the beginning of her study of stage Jews, *From Stereotype to Metaphor* (1982). It is an appropriate question with which to start this chapter, as well. Jewishness has variously been described as states of religion, race, and ethnicity. While the stage treatment of Jewish characters in musical theatre is less well documented than that of those in non-musicals, there exists a large number of characters identified as Jewish in the American musical theatre.

To make dramatic sense, the presence of any specific stage Other tends to be twinned, whether consciously or unconsciously, with some discussion of the prejudice against that group. Antisemitism⁴⁷ is therefore a fruitful study for this dissertation, particularly as "Jewishness" is less overtly visible than other signs of Otherness. And unlike many other forms of prejudice, antisemitism has both visibly intensified and declined in America within the span of the shows examined in this chapter (Shapiro, Brodtkin).

There are no female musical Jewish characters examined in this chapter. It is only by the 1960s that these women seem to become as visible as the men:⁴⁸ for example, *Milk and Honey* (1961) and *Fiddler on the Roof* both positioned Jewish women

alongside the male leads. Eventually, the Jewish female would become the chief character in such shows as *Funny Girl* (1964), *Hello, Dolly!* (1964), and *Molly* (1973). Therefore, in order to span the same period of time covered in the other chapters, as well as to keep the focus as concentrated as possible, I have focused on the Jewish male on the musical stage.

Schiff quite rightly points out that the first questions one must ask when examining Jewish characters are both “Who is a Jew” and “What is a Jew?” Adopting her methodology for this study, a Jew in a musical is “somebody who says he is” (x). Even then there is a profusion of different character types and signifiers to analyze. Schiff continues her questions by positing a corollary to “What is a Jew?:” “What does the character gain/lose by being Jewish?” In the history of musical stage Jews, these two answers conflate into the majority representation: on the musical stage, Jewishness is delineated by ethnic qualities and occasional stereotypical signifiers rather than religious values.⁴⁹ In fact, only one of the characters examined in this chapter, Leo Frank, discusses religion in any manner at all, and while it comes at a climactic moment, it is not a large part of his character. As far as gains or losses in Jewish characterization, the primary gain is that of an instant Other, or at least an immediate exoticism.

The stage Jew has been present in Western theatre literature since the medieval era, in portraits of historical/Biblical characters, but serving primarily as villain. “His greatest value to the playmakers of the [medieval] era was that he was different from all

⁴⁷ I will be following the more contemporary style of spelling this word throughout the chapter. As a non-hyphenated word, it unprivileges the concept of Jews as a race.

⁴⁸ Mirroring, perhaps, the rise in visibility of women throughout America.

⁴⁹ I would hypothesize that this is due more to ease of identification than anything else.

other men, a quality which illuminated his idiosyncrasies” (Schiff 1). It is this very alien characteristic that has historically served playwrights well, often to great reward.

As a synonym for ‘other,’ ‘Jew’ is impressively functional.

Fundamentally, it provides a label people use to distinguish that which is different, though not necessarily separate, from whatever they perceive themselves to be. . . . Reduced to its lowest common denominator, ‘Jew’ is a term people give to the other who is not like them. This distinction is inevitably pejorative, the creation of spite foraging for a target. As Sartre put it, ‘If the Jew did not exist, the anti-Semite would invent him.’” (Schiff 96-97)

The strongest summation of this idea would have to be that, given these circumstances, “in every respect, the Jew is alien. . . . He is universally despised, rejected and put to flight, yet he persists, omnipresent” (Schiff 68).

As is the case with much theatre history, the primary works regarding stage Jews—including Erdman’s *Staging the Jew* (1997) and Schiff’s volume—tend to ignore musicals altogether, despite the fact that *Fiddler on the Roof* (for example) has seen far more productions than those plays the authors discuss. But just as they have analyzed the Jew in non-musicals, this chapter will focus on musicals that

reveal, reflect, and redefine the ever-changing role of Jews in . . . society by shaping, one might say distorting, the group’s historical movements into a series of powerful and evocative images that freeze the spirit of an age and allow us to explore it. (Friedman 4)

A series of European pogroms and anti-Jewish decrees in the late nineteenth century resulted in a flood of Jewish immigration into the United States (Friedman 4). Most of these immigrants brought their music with them, and that, coupled with their interest in the English language, make it less than surprising that many of them would end up as composers and lyricists for Broadway and Tin Pan Alley. Arguably, a majority

of the creators of American musicals were/are Jewish themselves: a short list would have to include such notables as Irving Berlin, George and Ira Gershwin, Oscar Hammerstein, Richard Rodgers, Jerome Kern, Lorenz Hart, Alan Jay Lerner, Frederick Loewe, Leonard Bernstein, Betty Comden, Adolph Green, Kurt Weill, and Stephen Sondheim. Oddly, few of these wrote Jewish characters in their shows (Most “*Oklahoma!*” 78).

Andrea Most suggests that this lack of Jewish characters, particularly in early musicals, came from a desire to assimilate. “Unlike race, ethnicity was presented as a set of transient qualities that was nonthreatening because it could easily be performed away. As long as the characters could learn to speak, dress, and sing or dance in the American style, they were fully accepted into the stage or screen community” (Most “*Oklahoma!*” 78). Although overtly Jewish characters were rare on the early musical stage, Jewish performers were not: stage and screen stars such as Al Jolson, George Jessel, the Marx Brothers, Eddie Cantor, Sophie Tucker, Fannie Brice, and Ted Lewis are just a few that spring to mind. Jewish characters constitute only a *near* absence, however, as they eventually began appearing on the musical stage with at least some regularity, perhaps due to the huge success of some of the performers mentioned above. As of this writing, there is a long line of Jewish characters in American musicals.

In this chapter, I will examine four musicals with a Jewish male as a major character: *Mordecai Lyons* (1882), *Oklahoma!* (1943), *Cabaret* (1966), and *Parade* (1998). These works encompass many of the more significant types of musicals: the inner two from this list bookend the so-called “Golden Age” of the musical, with *Oklahoma!* inaugurating that age and *Cabaret*, according to many historians, ending it; the outer two were box office failures and to some extent, both were less than critical

successes. Between them, they comprise a miniature encapsulation of the musical genre, particularly with regard to the musical stage Jew. There are other similarities which will be examined as the chapter progresses, although one prominent one must be mentioned at the start: each of these men is characterized through music in a manner unavailable to non-musical theatre. Furthermore, each of these shows places a solitary Jewish male against a backdrop of Christianity, which often subsumes or at least subordinates both him and his Jewishness. It is thus that his Otherness becomes more visible than it otherwise might be. For this reason, I will not be examining *Fiddler On The Roof*, despite its enormous popularity worldwide. It is far less exemplary concerning its Jewish characters than the countless other musicals which place them in isolation and take little to no notice of their characters' religious beliefs.

Immigration and Antisemitism before 1888

America is a country founded on the idea of immigration, and groups from everywhere eventually began to find their way here. The first wave of German Jews who immigrated were welcomed, but "Jews who arrived in America from Germany after [1840] encountered a chillier welcome than their forebears. This much poorer and less sophisticated wave of newcomers concentrated in the crowded urban centers and underwent a painful process of proletarianization" (Arad 18). It was with this new group's arrival in America that "social anti-Jewish biases began to surface . . . and the Jew was everywhere the eternal alien" (Arad 19).

This alien manifestation was in marked contrast to the reception of the earlier waves of Jewish immigrants. This second wave was "much poorer and less sophisticated" than the earlier groups, and even the "more Americanized Jews were

disinclined to accept the ‘alien’ and ‘uncouth’ newcomers into their congregations,” due less to dogma than “the desire of native American Jews to assert their Americanism by separating themselves from Jewish ‘foreign’ elements” (Arad 19).

There was little that was new about this for many of these Jewish immigrants. Arriving from European countries where they were already Other(s), it was business as usual.

During the century or so before 1881, when mass immigration to America began, movements for Jewish emancipation and integration had proceeded by fits and starts in various European countries. . . . Yet even in those countries in which emancipation was well-established, in France, for example, Jews often remained a self-conscious minority, indeed, the quintessential minority against whom the status of minority rights was usually defined. Jews came to America with this consciousness of difference firmly engrained, either as a product of their medieval exclusion or as a result of their newer status as the paradigmatic European other (Biale 18).⁵⁰

The newer wave of refugee Jews were from Russia, which in the latter half of the nineteenth century had begun a cycle of vicious pogroms against indigenous Jewish citizens. These settlers began arriving in America by the 1880s; “by 1905, the Lower East Side had a population of a half-million Jews” (Takaki 283). Given how much of this urbanization created problems of overcrowding, crime and urban decay, it is perhaps not surprising that the second wave of Jewish immigrants in the early 1880s was not welcomed as warmly as the previous ones (see Diner).

These immigrants brought their musical and theatrical traditions with them, both elements which ultimately became part of the American Yiddish Theatre (Lifson 44). The heyday of the Yiddish theatre did in fact see the

production of musical works, but these were in languages other than English and do not appear to have utilized the same degree of popular music for which the early American musical was known (Lifson 69). The earliest Broadway musicals with overtly Jewish characters appear to be, improbably, those by the most Irish of playwrights, Edward Harrigan, with music by his father-in-law, David Braham.

“I Can’t Take It All When I Die:” Toward a Sympathetic Shylock

Ned Harrigan was best-known for his “Mulligan Guard” series, a sequence of shows with songs that particularly explored the Irish immigrant experience in New York City. He also dramatized other minorities, including German and Chinese immigrants, as well as African-Americans and Jews. Unlike many other dramatists of the period, Harrigan’s portrayals of these groups was generally seen as sympathetic by his contemporaries; it was said upon his death that “no playwright had ever explored New York’s low life so lovingly, with such striking portraits of the Germans, the Italians, the Negroes, and particularly the Irish who inhabited Gotham’s Lower East Side” (Moody 5).

According to Harley Erdman, the first Jewish character Harrigan and his partner, Tony Hart, wrote was “a Jewish old-clothing merchant” in their “Callahan the Detective” sketch, an effort which, with other, similar, sketches of the era finally gave Jews “a stage presence where previously they had been absent” (Erdman 76). Harrigan’s next Jewish character was the eponymous *Mordecai Lyons*, which premiered October 26, 1882. The music was composed

⁵⁰ This consciousness is reflected in the plays of the period, which included any number of variants on Shylock, as well as Jewish villains in melodrama (Erdman, Chapter One).

by David Braham, Harrigan's longtime collaborator and father-in-law, who was himself Jewish. The melodrama was a change of pace for the normally comic Harrigan, who not only wrote the piece but played the lead. The show, about an "overbearing Jewish father" (Erdman 89) was both a critical and box office failure.

Harrigan enjoyed playing Mordecai, credited Henry Irving's Shylock with giving him the idea, and was overjoyed when Edwin Booth said it was the best part he had ever played, but Harrigan, Irving and Booth were insignificant voices compared to the public. (Moody 132)

The plot runs as follows: the wife of Charles Chester dies while giving birth to their daughter, Mary. In the absence of the father, the baby is given to a neighbor, who hides the infant's identity papers in a clock. The clock is promptly stolen and sold to Mordecai Lyons, a pawnbroker. Years pass, and Mordecai's daughter, Esther, grows up to fall in love with Charles Chester, who forsakes her for the now grown Mary. Mordecai swears revenge for his daughter's disgrace, and since he knows from the papers in his possession that Mary is Charles' daughter, he goads Charles into the new marriage. Refused by Charles after one final appeal, Esther takes poison and falls senseless; she is presumed dead by both her father and the audience. Mordecai, crazed with grief, inadvertently gives away the news that Charles is marrying his own daughter, and in his own turn faints (or dies; the audience is never certain). Esther recovers miraculously and Charles asks her to marry him; the curtain falls as one of the wedding guests proclaims "Let the ceremony proceed!"

It seems that the show's failure was due less to the melodrama itself than the audience's wish "that Harrigan return to the Mulligans" (Moody 132). In fact,

while there were “sprinklings of clichés about Jewish thrift—‘don’t vast de bread by dropping de crumbs,’ dunk it in the coffee; buy beer without froth, . . . most reporters thought Mordecai’s name must be Mulligan” (Moody 131). In other words, Harrigan’s audiences expected Mulligan to the point where they saw Mulligan in roles that were far from this signature character, evidently anticipating him as a comic Irish Catholic, not a relatively sympathetic Jewish pawnbroker. The review in *The New York Clipper* also blames the early withdrawal of another show, *The Blackbird*: “no possible display of magic talent can fully compensate the spectators for their failure to hear and see what they had expected to see and hear” (Finson 283).

Harrigan credited the character of Mordecai as being inspired by Shakespeare’s Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*. Harley Erdman claims that Shylock was the “dominant Jewish figure bequeathed by the classic repertory to the nineteenth-century stage” (17), saying that the character “takes his place alongside Harriet Beecher Stowe’s Uncle Tom as a fictional creation who has so shaped popular understanding of an ethnicity that he has become a ready reference point” (19). *The Merchant of Venice* has an extensive history in American theatre and was second only to *Hamlet* in the frequency of production between 1870 and 1919 (21). The nineteenth century also saw the slow substitution of the traditional “evil” characterization of the role with an attempt at a more sympathetic portrayal. This attempt at sympathy must not be understood as a complete reversal of the more unpleasant stereotypes, however. Especially as acted by Henry Irving and Edwin Booth, the attempt at sympathy “represents a

transitional performance in a transitional era, where the Jew's pathetic and grotesque accouterments served not only as bridges to a more sympathetic understanding of the Jew but also as fences which kept him at a distance" (31).

Other stage Jews were similarly unpleasant. Tom Taylor's *The Ticket-Of-Leave Man* (1864) is a "counterfeiter, forger, and burglar who has never done an honest day's work in his life." Likewise, Dion Boucicault's stage Jews are criminals of various sorts, and Solomons, a character in John Brougham's *The Lottery of Life* (1868), "is bent on revenge, on increasing his hoard of money, and on victimizing the innocent hero" (Dobkowski 46).⁵¹ Mordecai, on the other hand, is bent on revenge primarily because his daughter has been wronged. Harrigan further complicates what would otherwise be straightforwardly antisemitic theatre by writing Chester as anything but a typical "innocent hero" traditional to melodrama.

"Mordecai Lyons" is Mordecai's own song of introduction.⁵² While it is obviously meant to be funny at the character's expense, and particularly via the stereotype of the parsimonious Jew, there is an interesting dichotomy at work throughout the song. The first verse brings us into Mordecai's world, literally telling of the used clothing he sells. The occupation may be stereotypical, but the only moments when any attempts at formulaic humor manifest themselves are with two particular statements: "I warrant them all superfine" and "So beautiful,

⁵¹ Novels from this period are just as likely to be intentionally antisemitic, with works such as the anonymous *Gwendolyn: A Sequel to George Eliot's Daniel Deronda* (1878) deliberately rewriting one of the more positive fictional Jewish characters. Lew Wallace's *Ben Hur* (1880) at least attempted a more even-handed depiction of its Jewish characters; Dobkowski calls the work "ambivalent" in its attitudes (16).

⁵² See the Appendix for the complete lyric to this and other songs discussed from *Mordecai Lyons*.

lovely, and new.” In the first instance, it is obvious that not *all* his used clothing can be “superfine.” The second line comes as the end of the first verse, after a long catalogue of his inventory; it is obviously the “new” that is meant humorously in this instance. Nonetheless, any merchant who expects to sell goods has to put the best face possible on his/her merchandise. Additionally, these lines are a far cry the character upon whom Mordecai was based: Shylock, who insists upon his pound of flesh.

The second verse describes Alexander, Mordecai’s brother and a pawnbroker himself; this verse concerns itself far more with negative stereotypes than the first. Alexander charges forty percent interest and made “a million in gold . . . on the Black Friday fall,” obviously a reference to the panic of 1869, when a group of speculators sought to take over the U.S. gold market. This is more traditional antisemitic imagery: Alexander makes his money off others’ misfortunes. Nevertheless, it is Mordecai’s *brother* who has done these things, not Mordecai himself.

The third verse moves back again to Mordecai. This stanza’s primary focus is Mordecai’s obsession with money, but it is never as dreadful as Shylock’s same obsession. Mordecai is most assuredly not a spendthrift, but neither does he completely ignore those poorer than himself: he gives beggars a penny. It is apparent that this is meant to comically reify the stereotype of Jews as penurious, with the singer giving the least amount possible to mendicants. Nevertheless, while a penny is indeed a small amount, the least amount truly possible to give would be nothing. As Mordecai is based on Shylock, it may be worth quoting the

latter's response to Antonio's bond forfeiture, utilizing language similar to that used by Mordecai in his song's last verse: "A beggar, that used to come so smug upon the mart; let him look to his bond" (Shakespeare 460). At least Mordecai gives alms. The third verse ends with the amusing line "I can't take it all when I die," the humor arising from the idea that Mordecai obviously expects to take at least *some* of it with him when he dies. Again, while interpretation may depend upon the nuances of performance, this seems utterly distant (particularly in terms of self-awareness) from the ideas embodied in Shylock or the many stage versions of Dicken's Fagin.

Musically, Mordecai's introductory song is important for a sense of Braham's musical inclusivity. To begin with, the song is a waltz.⁵³ Given the alien otherness of Jews throughout theatrical history, the fact that Braham places Mordecai's song in a popular Western genre is significant. It is also in a major key (B-flat), dipping into a minor sound (its relative key of G-minor) for only a very few measures. This flirtation with a minor key at least alludes to a "Jewish" sound for Mordecai, minor keys being somewhat "characteristic" of that sound.⁵⁴ Braham avoids a completely stereotypical minor key, which pulls Mordecai out of the realm of musical stereotype and into the jurisdiction of musical hegemony: a waltz in a major key, with only a brief move into the traditional relative minor. In dramatic terms, this song assimilates Mordecai, or at least allows for the possibility of his assimilation into his surroundings.

⁵³ Well over half of Braham's songs are in triple meter.

⁵⁴ Not surprisingly. Amnon Shiloah presents the four basic modes which make up most of the traditional Jewish sacred music; three of the four are all or mostly a minor key sound.

The final number is also worthy of examination. “When the Clock in the Tower Strikes Twelve” is sung by a group; the music even has a second vocal part which calls the beats of the clock as the refrain ends. The group is described as a Jewish “glee club” (Erdman 89) and the “fraternal fellowship” they sing of is that between Gentile and Jew. The music is most definitely in the correct vein for a comradely drinking song: in F-major, with a larger amount than usual of chromatic intervals, which allows it an air of “schmaltz” in keeping with its genre; in 4/4, it is obviously meant to be sung with all the rubato this kind of number calls for. In other words, there is no difference in style between this and most other fraternal drinking songs.⁵⁵ It is true that nowhere does the lyric develop any specificity as to the groups singing it; this is no doubt due as much to the song’s “liftability” for public consumption as anything else. Regardless of what the song does say about them, the singers are indeed Jews wishing brotherhood with Gentiles, and it is quite a remarkable stage moment for this era. The Jews who immigrated to America during this era were “poorer and less sophisticated” than their predecessors, and were more “concentrated in the crowded urban centers.” This group encountered social anti-Jewish biases that had begun shortly after the previous wave (Arad 18-19). Harrigan and Braham’s inclusivity would take a long while to be repeated.

Even a song that has nothing to do with Mordecai himself contributes to a subversion of the expected audience response to Mordecai. Harrigan’s onstage collaborator, Tony Hart, playing a character named Mendoza, sang one of the

⁵⁵ C.f. such songs as “Golden Days,” from *The Student Prince*. There is a certain element of intentional “mistiness” as these men sing together over drinks.

show's five songs "about his frustration in mashing a girl at Macy's emporium. Her only response is 'Cash! Cash! Cash!'" (Moody 131). The song is the story of a (presumably) non-Jewish female who evinces the stereotypical love of money so often associated with Jews. It is true that, given the internal evidence within the song, it is not possible to know if the woman is Jewish. It is also worthy of note that "there is a durable perception that the Jewess was not as bad as her male counterpart" (Schiff 3). If she is not in fact intended to be read as Jewish, the irony is complete; however, even if she is meant to be seen in that light, the fact that she is actually cares more for money than love is intended ironically, and thus, she casts a somewhat positive light on Mordecai.

Mordecai's death places him squarely in the camp of those stage Jews who are never assimilated. It is only those men who have a sense of their own performance or who assimilate entirely that survive the end of the play intact. Characters such as Shylock, Fagin, and the others discussed in this chapter will often either die or be run out of town, surviving only as changed, broken, men. Mordecai dies, or is left unconscious; after he has broken the news of Chester's paternal relationship to his future bride, his function within the play is over. His death is due as much to his own character and actions as to any antisemitism on the part of those around him. In fact, it is really only through the character himself that overt antisemitism occurs, particularly in his original song. The creators clearly intended to write a more human(e) portrait of Shylock, and although there are inherent characteristics of representation in every age that

strike another age as odd or offensive, Harrigan and Braham evidently proposed a play with more well-rounded characters.

There is one other traditional stereotype that exists within the framework of *Mordecai Lyons*, but it is not unexpected in a work based on *The Merchant of Venice*: “the beautiful Jewess and her repulsive father” (Schiff 4). In the majority of the works in which this couple appeared, the “fundamental wickedness of the Jew, typically a usurer, plays off against the redeemability incarnate in his daughter, who also represents the mother of religion. She is not only irresistible, but generally enamored of a Christian for whom she will eventually forsake her father, and, of course, Judaism” (Schiff 72). Ellen Schiff discusses several variations, including ones wherein the father is not particularly unhappy about the marriage of his daughter to a Christian, but the portrayal in this musical still represents a great softening of a negative image. On the face of it, Esther and Mordecai fit into this category, but this particular dual characterization differs from previous ones in essential ways: to begin with, Mordecai acts in a malevolent manner only toward the man who has betrayed his daughter, and is so undone by Esther’s seeming death that he cannot contain the evil plot any longer. Shylock, upon whom Mordecai is ostensibly based, cannot tell whether he is more upset by the loss of his daughter or the money she stole, and wishes “any of the stock of Barrabas / Had been her husband rather than a Christian!” (Shakespeare 470). Mordecai is upset more by Charles Chester’s betrayal of Esther than her original plan to marry a Christian.

There was to be only one more Jewish role in Harrigan's canon, and he would return to the stereotypes allowing for a more friendly audience reception. "Harrigan's unwieldy play was a critical and box office failure, and he quickly returned to his accustomed comic stage Irish roles. The next time he included stage Jews in a play, they were the grotesque, song-and-dance old clothes men of *The Leather Patch* (1886)" (Erdman 89), although as far as can be ascertained from the review in *The New York Clipper*, there was only one clothing merchant, predictably named Cohen. Harrigan attempted one last time to put a less stereotyped Jewish character on the musical stage with 1891's *Reilly and the 400*. His wife, who owned title to the new theatre the piece was to inaugurate, refused to allow him to feature another Jewish leading role: "'You've got to play the thing they think you are; and besides you can't open in my theatre as a Jew'" (qtd in Moody, 188). She had her way; Reilly became an Irish stockbroker.

"I Am Easily Assimilated:" Musical Jews and Antisemitism during the early 1900s

Many Jews resisted racial definitions and clung tenaciously to the notion that one could become an American simply by adopting American culture, language and appearance. The musicals of the 1920s and 30s, many of them written and performed by Jews from immigrant backgrounds, likewise suggest a vehement opposition to rigid racial categories, advocating a more fluid conception of identity. (Most "Izzy" 314).

It is certainly true that in the shows of these decades, the Jewish characters demonstrate a fluidity of identity unheard of in other eras.⁵⁶ Characters played by actors such as Groucho Marx and Eddie Cantor assume a variety of personalities with startling rapidity.

The 1920s contained two particularly prominent musical stage Jews: Henry Williams (played by Eddie Cantor) in 1928's *Whoopee!* and *Girl Crazy*'s (1930) Gieber Goldfarb, portrayed by the Yiddish dialect comedian Willie Howard. In both cases, Jewishness was twinned with urban ethnicity and was played primarily for laughs as a Northern city dweller ended up in the American West in each show. Andrea Most believes comic musical Jews like these men (as well as *Oklahoma!*'s Ali Hakim) are metatheatrical by nature. Their knowledge of the varied roles they play allows them to be

especially powerful in the world of the musical. They establish a special relationship with the ultimate arbiters of theatrical success—the audience beyond the footlights, [who] can share the pleasure of watching the rest of the cast—the straight men—become increasingly confused” (Most “Izzy” 313).

Oklahoma! (1943) has just such a character in Ali Hakim. Ali manages to vary his roleplaying according to his needs, in much the manner of Henry Williams and Gieber Goldfarb. The latter two are literally running for their lives at various points, while Hakim's primary reasons for delving into the world of metatheatre is to avoid marriage. The point is still the same, however; all these men manage to survive and assimilate on some level because of their innate awareness of their own performance(s).

American antisemitism reached its peak during World War II.⁵⁷ “Before and during the war, a large percentage of Americans accepted anti-Semitic stereotypes. . . . The most important stereotype featured the unscrupulous and greedy Jewish businessman” (Shapiro 5). One such businessman, the Jewish

⁵⁶ And seemingly, unavailable to other, non-Jewish, characters.

⁵⁷ See Shapiro, page 5-6, and Wyman, Chapter 1.

peddler, is such a ubiquitous character as to become a “figure of Jewish-American folklore” (Takaki 286).

Russian Jews, immigrating to the United States in the later nineteenth century, came from a country where they were prohibited from owning land. As a result, more Jews lived “in the urban areas where they earned their livelihoods as merchants and artisans. In 1879, 38 percent of Jews were employed in manufacturing or crafts, 32 percent in commerce and only 3 percent in agriculture [in Russia]” (Takaki 278). It is to be expected that many newcomers to America would, in attempting to keep their occupations in place, continue on with at least a form of what they were trained to do. It came about that, “at the turn of the century, the Lower East Side was the most densely populated section of the city” (Takaki 284). This would mean that overcrowding occurred in professional settings as well as private sectors, and that there were simply not enough retail spaces to accommodate all the merchants trying to maintain their occupation: hence, the streetcorner peddler. However, for a diasporic group associated with their love of learning to the exclusion of trades, there were, as one unnamed contemporary observed at the turn of the 19th century, “few more pathetic sights than an old man with a beard, a little black cap on his head and a venerable face—a man who had been perhaps a Hebraic or Talmudic scholar in the old country . . . standing for sixteen hours a day by his push-cart” (qtd in Takaki 286).

There was a positive aspect to this engagement with commerce, however it might play out on the street corner:

Representing over 50 percent of all peddlers in New York City in 1906, the Jewish peddler seemed to personify the mystique of Jewish immigrant success, the triumph of imported entrepreneurial virtues and values celebrated by some scholars. The Jews had come to America . . . with the middle-class values of thrift, sobriety, ambition, desire for education, and the delay of immediate gratification for the sake of long-range goals. (Takaki 286)

Even more directly, as Moses Rischin has noted,

The peddler's pack . . . provided the most direct introduction to American ways, the most promising school for the study of the country's speech, tastes and economic needs, and the broadest field for the play of the aspiring tradesman's imagination. (55).

The Farmer and the Cowhand (and the Merchant): Antisemitism and Community in Oklahoma!

Tin Pan Alley, which gave rise to many of the composers and lyricists of the early American musical theatre, also gave birth to an abundance of songs concerned with Jewish themes in the earliest years of the twentieth century.

"Most of the songs, in one way or another, dwell upon the incongruity of Jews in various situations," with one strand concerning "Jew as cowboy" (Erdman 140).

Whether the stories told in these songs end happily or unhappily, the songs' humor derives from an urban Jewish male out of his accustomed element.⁵⁸

Oklahoma, unlike these songs and unlike such earlier shows such as *Whoopee!*, features a character whose humor does not spring from being out of his element. He is possibly the most famous musical stage peddler in history,

⁵⁸ This trend has continued, in one form or another, to the present day. The 1960s produced "The Ballad of Irving," a song from the revue *When You're In Love, The Whole World is Jewish*, which depends for its humor upon the Jewish title cowboy and his inability to work within the traditional Western scheme. *Parade*, in its own way, will work within this system as well.

Oklahoma!'s Ali Hakim. While he is ostensibly Persian,⁵⁹ casting proved the character to be more Jewish: "Joseph Buloff [the original Ali] was an ideal peddler. Buloff was a veteran of the Yiddish theatre, and the peddler, technically Persian, was not really the Jewish comic Buloff made of him" (Morrdan R&H 39). While a specific actor may always put his or her spin on a character, there remain two unassailable instances of support for Ali being "Jewish," at least in style. First, it was Rodgers himself who cast Buloff in the role, having admired his performance in the film *They Met in Argentina* (1941). Secondly, the character of Ali fits in neatly with both history and stereotype as Jewish: he is a peddler, he cannot pass up any chance to make money, and he is both exotic and more sexualized than any other character except Jud.⁶⁰

Oklahoma! (1943) is based on Lynn Riggs' 1931 play *Green Grow the Lilacs*. While Riggs' play was not successful, it already had a musical design about it; it is full of traditional Western songs such as "Skip To My Lou." Despite strong correspondences between the original play and the musical adaptation, there are equally important differences: Ado Annie is more self-aware and has a greatly expanded role in the musical version; the death of Jud⁶¹ is far less problematic in the musical; and most importantly in terms of this study, the Peddler's role is expanded greatly.

⁵⁹ "The Pedler," as Riggs termed him, was from Syria in *Green Grow the Lilacs*.

⁶⁰ Morrdan believes that "it's worth noting that, when Rodgers and Hammerstein superintended the *Oklahoma!* film in 1955, they deracinated the peddler, giving him to the gently all-American Eddie Albert: as if admitting that Buloff's performance was the one piece in the original show that wasn't quite correct" (*Beautiful Mornin'* 78). It is also quite possible that they simply felt a Jewish peddler would not play in Peoria as easily as New York. Regardless, the character is often still played with a thick, very "fake" accent. Even Albert has a rather strange, unplaceable vocal intonation through his performance.

⁶¹ Called Jeeter in Riggs' play, but changed by R&H to avoid confusion with Lester Jeeter, the lead of the long-running *Tobacco Road*.

Most of Riggs' scenes with the Peddler remain nearly intact in the musical, complete with replication of some dialogue and stage directions (he enters in both works with "his little beady eyes sparkling professionally" (Riggs 47; Hammerstein 23). Where they differ is after the first scenes in Jud's smokehouse, when Rodgers and Hammerstein attempt a more rounded, more humorous, and more integrated and accepted (if not assimilated) character. To begin with, they give Riggs' unidentified "Pedler" a name: Ali Hakim. The assimilationist attempt is not without its troublesome aspect, however. Just as Charles Dickens never refers to *Oliver Twist*'s Fagin by name, but only as "the Jew,"⁶² so too do Rodgers and Hammerstein never list Ali Hakim by his name, but only as "Peddler;" it is up to the other characters in both works to give the audiences the men's names.⁶³ Juliet Steyn believes that this allows for a Jewish "type" in *Oliver Twist*, and the same holds true for Ali.

Fagin stands in for all Jewish people, past, present, and future. In *Oliver Twist*, Dickens constructs *Jew* through an elaborate synthesis of imagery from the past, made credible in the present, and viable for the future, through his application of social and racial theories. . . . The figuration of a Jewish type is both a model of and for identity: an identity formed and realized. An identity is assumed between concept and object, between *Jew* (as a regulating idea) and real Jews. (44-45).

It is the "imagery from the past" that presents the most problematic and troubling facets of an otherwise communally integrated character. The signifiers include the iconic image of a peddler itself, his "little beady eyes sparkling professionally" at the thought of money to be made, and his aggressive sexuality.

⁶² See Steyn's discussion of "Fagin as a Sign."

⁶³ This is true only of the libretto in *Six Plays by Rodgers and Hammerstein*, published in 1955. Later versions of *Oklahoma!* give Ali Hakim's name throughout.

Aside from his profession as a Peddler (a classification Rodgers and Hammerstein were more or less stuck with), the musical either defuses these other stereotypes or restructures them in such a way as to allow for the humor surrounding the character to emerge. In other words, the authors play on the audiences' awareness of these stereotypes.

One such example concerns Ali's attitude toward money. As noted previously, the character description on his entrance is lifted, in part, directly from Riggs' play, and it indicates his attitude toward money in a handily stereotypical manner: "The Peddler puts down his bulging suitcase, his little beady eyes sparkling professionally" (Hammerstein, *Six Plays* 23). However, as the show progresses and he becomes embroiled in what promises to be a shotgun wedding to Ado Annie, he cheerfully parts with a great deal of money—while pretending to allow Will Parker to outmaneuver him—in order to avoid matrimony. It is precisely this love of money which allows the audience to enjoy his giving it away in order to avoid something he fears more.

"The bipolarity with which Jews are stereotyped is frequently implosive, their very contradictions making such stereotypes protean and unreliable" (Lindemann 14). Jewish male sexuality is one such bipolar site. "The charge of Jewish lasciviousness may be traced back to ancient times, although its combination with the calumny that they actively employ their sexual prowess for the purpose of "Judaizing" is a later refinement" (Felsenstein 118). "One writer . . . concluded that Jews were 'probably the most lecherous breed in existence'" (Lindemann 380). On the other hand, "the image of feminized, perverse Jewish masculinity has a long European tradition" (Erdman 36). Though the most

extreme views of this stereotype (which include male menstruation and prostitution) did not gain a large foothold in America, there is still an extensive tradition of variations on this theme in American theatrical works; examples include an extensive convention of oddly mild social address (Fagin's use of "my dear" is only one of many such forms of speech throughout the nineteenth century). There is also a lengthy history of Jewish male failure in physical confrontation, "whether through moral cowardice or physical weakness, where each implies the other" (Erdman 37). This last may simply stem from different cultural ideas of what constitutes "masculine" behavior; Jews have often prized learning above physical strength.

Sexuality in *Oklahoma!* is presented primarily through both Ali and Jud. Ali's position requires discussion within the stereotype of Jewish male sexuality running rampant. In both the musical and non-musical versions of the story, the character enters and rushes to kiss Laurey's hand; in both, the move is probably meant to be seen as a move to charm these women out of some money. It is only in *Oklahoma!* that the opening gesture becomes something of a sexual characterization, as he flirts with all the female characters. Ali is beloved by audiences for his courting of Ado Annie, and in particular his famous "Persian goodbyes," long and passionate kisses. He manages to escape from Carnes, Ado Annie's father, but is quickly caught by Gertie's father and forced to marry her. Even Aunt Eller is not safe from his sexual advances: immediately after his entrance, he attempts to sell Aunt Eller some garters, attempting to put them on her himself.

Ali derives his assimilability by juxtaposition—sexually as well as otherwise—with Jud: he “is a theatrical, assimilable ethnic (‘white’) immigrant, and Jud is a realistic, unassimilable, and racially defined ‘dark’ man” (Most *Oklahoma!* 81). The two are further contrasted by their respective positions in their particular sexual triangles: Ali flirts harmlessly with Ado Annie and is obviously never serious about taking her away from Will Parker. Jud, on the other hand, is quite serious and overtly sexual in his feelings regarding Laurey, to the point of attempting to murder Curly in his efforts to clear the field for himself. The notion of Ali as assimilable and “whiter” than Jud is borne out by Karen Brodtkin’s book *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says About Race in America* (1998). The 1940 census “no longer distinguished native whites of white parentage from those . . . of ethnic parentage, so European immigrants and their children were more securely white by submersion in an expanded notion of whiteness” (36). This of course happened while Rodgers and Hammerstein were writing *Oklahoma!*. Perhaps more importantly for the character of Ali himself, Brodtkin avers that by this point, “immigrants became ethnic groups whose children had successfully assimilated into the mainstream and risen to the middle class” instead of being considered “dirty and dangerous races that would destroy American democracy” (36). There is no better explication of the presentational difference between Jud and Ali. Jud is introduced in his smokehouse, which is “a dark, dirty building” with cobwebs and a window that “lets in a little light, but not much” (39). During the singing of “Poor Jud is Daid,” the stage directions even describe him as repeating Curly’s line “reverently like a Negro at a revivalist meeting” (42). Next to Jud, Ali appears harmless, positive, and far more easily assimilable.

Ali's sexuality is quite pronounced in relation to most of the other men onstage, but is milder and less threatening than that of Jud.

Whereas Jud desperately wants Laurey, Ali is playful with women. He flirts harmlessly with Annie, ensuring that Will wins her hand. . . . His sexuality, unlike Jud's, is largely performance, on the surface, and nonthreatening. His famous "Persian goodbyes," which leave Annie gasping for breath, seem as much for the audience's benefit as for hers. In contrast, Jud broods on his pornographic pictures in his lonely room. His sexuality smolders in private. (Most "*Oklahoma!*" 84)

Moreover, the audience only sees real evidence of Ali's sexuality—the famed goodbyes—when he is in fact leaving the area, so he cannot really be a threat. And, of course, he is eventually "caught" and sexually tamed by Gertie and her father to comic effect.

Assimilation, of which this taming is part, is a strong theme of *Oklahoma!*.

The formation of a community occurs at some level through every musical theatre chorus, but *Oklahoma!*'s story reinforces the idea repeatedly.

The story seems to be about the importance of choice and freedom in romantic love. . . . But the driving energy of the musical numbers contradicts the overt message of the plot—instead of privileging individual choices and dilemmas, this energy celebrates a utopian melding of the differences into a unified loving American community. (Most *Oklahoma!* 79)

The Others—Jud and Ali—are measured against this community.

The edifice of racial assignment forced differences and conflicts to be contained—spatially, discursively, and politically—by a kind of 'us-ness,' a negotiated, overlapping, and familiar range of practices, meanings, and values that were locally hegemonic. (Brodkin 105)

The musical creates exactly such a local hegemony and pulls Ali into it while keeping the racial and sexual Other—Jud—out .

However, this assimilation is awkward, at best. Ali, as peddler and future settled store manager, is actually mentioned as part the utopian community envisioned in “The Farmer and The Cowhand:”

And when this territory is a state,
And jines the union jist like all the others,
The farmer and the cowman and the merchant
Must all behave theirsels and act like brothers (Hammerstein *Six Plays* 80).

Immediately after these lines a problem appears, for when Aunt Eller articulates how this assimilation and cohesion might be achieved, the merchant is absent. “Cowboys, dance with farmers’ daughters! / Farmers, dance with the ranchers’ gals!” Ali’s exclusion from this idea is perhaps more ironic than would be that of any other character, given that he spends more time discussing marriage than anyone in the show.

Ali is assimilated because he sings with others, just as Jud cannot be because he never does.⁶⁴ However, the simultaneous obstruction to the Peddler’s full inclusion in this community become even more apparent in his only song, “It’s a Scandal! It’s a Outrage!” Andrea Most believes that in this song, “Ali has gained power and sympathy by theatrically aligning himself with the musical community—the chorus” (84). Rodgers takes a leaf from the same album as Braham and places the song in a major key, incorporating Ali as a cheerful (despite his ostensible complaint) member of the choral community. However, the character barely sings in his own song, instead simply speaking all but one of his lines in rhythm. This seems to further indicate that his status as a member of the community is not entirely viable.

The title number completes this problematizing of Ali’s assimilation. Most states that “immigrant (Ali) and native (Curley and Laurey) alike sing, ‘We know we belong to

the land,”” (80), but Ali does not sing this until the final curtain; he is conspicuously absent from the original number, having left the community until he is brought back, essentially at gunpoint, after a shotgun wedding. He certainly is more assimilated than Jud, who dies,⁶⁵ but there remain troublesome questions.

“What Would You Do?:” *Cabaret* and 1960s America

American antisemitism dwindled conspicuously after World War II (see Shapiro and Brodtkin). This may have been due—at least in part—to Jewish cultural assimilation, as the “Jewish immigrant population had gradually died out, while the second and third generations had melted into the middle class” (Shapiro 52). Brodtkin believes that Jewish men became tremendously middle-class after the war, taking advantage of the college boom to educate themselves, as well as using their economic prosperity to play a role in the “whitening process” (37). It is also possible that with the post-war dissemination of information regarding the Holocaust itself, antisemitism went astray in the international post-war shock.

By the time of the turbulent 1960s, Jewish ideas, themes and people seemed almost universal. The 1967 Pulitzer Prize for literature—the year after *Cabaret* opened—was won by Bernard Malamud. The early sixties saw a profusion of Jewish-themed characters in Broadway musicals, beginning with Jerry Herman’s *Milk and Honey* (1961), about the new nation of Israel, and moving through Dolly Levi in *Hello,*

⁶⁴ The exception to this, “Pore Jud is Daid,” is only a duet with Jud echoing Curley’s thoughts, and actually concerns itself with his expulsion from the community by fantasizing about his death and funeral.

⁶⁵ Several authors have speculated that Hammerstein’s racially dark Others *have* to die by the end of their shows—Julie in *Show Boat* (1927), Jud, the King of Siam (1958) to avoid any real intermingling with white spouses. This seems to be to be perhaps less due to any covert racism on Hammerstein’s part than to stem from a reflection that the dark Other cannot yet assimilate.

Dolly (1964), Fanny Brice in *Funny Girl* (1964), and of course, *Fiddler on the Roof* (1965), one of the most popular musicals of all time.

However, antisemitic feelings did continue. One important poll in 1966 indicated that anywhere from twenty-five to fifty percent of the church-going respondents still held some kind of antisemitic belief (cited in Dawidowicz 67). A new form of postwar, Eastern, antisemitism was generated as a result of the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. Conflicts with its Arab neighbors began immediately; the new nation was invaded its second day of existence. While United States policy has traditionally supported Israel, American Jews have followed the nation's turbulent fortunes with great interest. Between the Holocaust and the troubled history of Israel, American Jews were certainly aware of the fragility of life and tradition.

The 1960s also gave rise to the American civil rights movement. Not only did this change the face of the country, but it changed the thrust of the American narrative(s):

With the rise of the civil rights movement, a very different narrative focusing on African-Americans became dominant. . . . [A]lthough it seemed for a period as if Jews might be able to wed their narrative to that of blacks in the rhetoric of the early civil rights movement, it quickly became apparent that the experiences of these two groups were fundamentally different. . . . [N]ot only economic success and social integration but also an intrinsically different history divided the Jews from American blacks. (Biale 28)

Jewish leaders did attempt to aid African Americans during the Civil Rights movement, but were eventually once again targets of hatred, this time from the very group they were helping (Wyman 407). The decade was home to a time of great unrest and with a knowledge of recent antisemitism of such intense hostility that it could never be forgotten.

“If You Could See Her Through My Eyes:” *Cabaret* and the Other

Into this tumultuous era came *Cabaret* (1966), a show with a long and turbulent history itself. It began as a book: Christopher Isherwood’s *The Berlin Stories* (1939), which was dramatized non-musically by John van Druten in 1959⁶⁶ and filmed in 1955. The original *Cabaret* premiered in 1966, followed in 1972 by Bob Fosse’s famous film version, with its heavily revised book and its truncated and revised score. There have been various revivals of the stage musical, most recently Sam Mendes’ acclaimed 1998 version; all the revivals have in some form utilized portions of the film’s new songs and Mendes’ revival is no exception. This chapter will focus primarily on the original 1966 libretto and 1998 revival, with some discussion of other productions.

From the beginning, *Cabaret* seemed an unpromising choice for a musical. Sheldon Harnick recalled that his first response to the idea of musicalizing *The Berlin Stories* was “it can’t be done,” (Landmark Symposium 13) but when Hal Prince gained the rights, the work began. In fact, the famous ironic cabaret numbers and their keen observations concerning the story around them evolved only gradually (16), as did the story of Herr Schultz and Fraulein Schneider.

Cabaret is often considered one of the first concept musicals, with its pointed and ironic “cabaret” commentary on the book musical sections.⁶⁷ Hal Prince contended that “pre-Hitler Germany is the leading theme in *Cabaret* and the cabaret emcee its leading character” (Rosenburg and Harburg 141). Despite the brilliance of its concept, however,

⁶⁶ As *I Am A Camera*.

⁶⁷ There are various definitions for “concept” musicals. Stanley Green calls such a work “one in which style of presentation takes precedence over the story itself” (285). Another definition is that these works have concepts or themes that “are as important as character and plot” (Rosenburg and Harburg 141). John Degen of Florida State University includes on this list shows which are one person’s vision throughout the entire creative process.

many critics have commented over the years about the show's "structural schizophrenia," (Copeland 88) in which all the scenes set outside the cabaret itself have been considered to be old-fashioned and ill-managed, rather than of a piece with the "conceptual" scenes set in the cabaret. This attitude has intensified since the release of the Fosse film in 1972, in which all of the songs were sung as part of the cabaret show, with the exception of "Tomorrow Belongs to Me."⁶⁸ Fosse's film intensified the cabaret's ironic reflections by contrast to a rewritten story.

In fact, the original show was more coherently conceptual than might have been thought: with the cabaret songs as mocking commentary on the "outside" events, even the original "book numbers" take on an identity in the chain of references. In fact, the book numbers were originally planned to contain as much commentary concerning non-immediate events as any other songs; the creators planned "Why Should I Wake Up?" to comment as much on the outside world as it does on Cliff, with him singing while the audience saw Nazi atrocities in silhouette behind him. The staging was abandoned when Prince could not find a way to make it work.

Cabaret has traditionally caused discomfort in its audiences. I would propose that a great deal of this discomfort comes from the various times audiences are directly or indirectly implicated by the onstage actions. The Jew may traditionally be Other to most audiences, but when they are essentially invited to participate in acknowledging their antisemitism through various mechanisms present in the musical, it becomes a profoundly unsettling experience.

⁶⁸ This one exception is perhaps more disturbing than in the original production by virtue of its isolation in the new venue.

Mendes's production wants nothing more than to entertain us—to entertain us to *death*, if necessary. It wants to make us fully complicit with what goes on. . . . Significantly, every version of *Cabaret* has been determined that one way or another the contemporary audience should see itself reflected in the decadence of Weimar. In fact, Boris Aronson's legendary design for Hal Prince's 1966 Broadway production featured an upstage mirror that served this precise purpose. (Copeland 27)

The show owes a musical debt to Kurt Weill; interestingly, this musical similarity becomes less perceptible as the show proceeds, and allows the audience to be drawn into the world of the musical more easily and readily. For example, by the time "The Money Song" (1966 version) and "If You Could See Her Through My Eyes," are sung, traditional American Broadway compositional styles are emphasized, rather than a sound indebted to Weill. This transformation into conventional sound styles allows the audience to let its guard down and draws them into the songs, making the resultant shocks all the more outrageous.

The 1998 revival has not only made more of the conceptual basis for the show—all the book numbers are now enacted by the cabaret performers—but the original seating in what was Studio 54 is set up as a genuine cabaret.⁶⁹ The audience is seated at tables throughout the theatre, literally and figuratively becoming the cabaret audience, with playbills distributed only at the end of the evening. Continuing this line of luring the audience into the action, the Emcee enters and greets the theatre audience as his own: "Leave your troubles outside!" (Kander 33), advice which Sally will eventually take to the letter. When the line is repeated in the last scene, it is over harsh and dissonant music which facilitates the audience's realization of their role in the continued interweaving between theatre and reality. They have, indeed, left their own troubles outside the

⁶⁹ The space was officially renamed The Kit Kat Klub for further postmodern identification between on and off stage spaces.

theatre, only to be confronted by worse ones from the past. They have also been faced with several characters who—like the audience—are the type to leave their troubles outside, even at the expense of others’ safety or lives. This disturbing ending subverts the lyric line (and similar ideas propounded throughout the show) that “Life is a Cabaret!” This particular cabaret reflects life all too well; it is certainly not the glamorous, fun approach that might be expected from such a title.

During the 1960s, the audience (perhaps) entered the theatre in order to leave outside civil rights unrest and political (and real) warfare between Israel and other nations, as well as the emerging difficulties surrounding what would eventually become the Vietnam War. The Mendes revival opened in May of 1998; that year, audiences would still attempt to leave their troubles outside. This time, their concerns included AIDS, a still-struggling Israel, and by the end of the year, a vote on impeachment for then-President Clinton. Antisemitism still existed: David Duke and Louis Farrakhan had become household names in the intervening years between the original production and the revival. Pat Buchanan, a defender of Hitler as “an individual of great courage” won the 1992 New Hampshire presidential primary (among others), gathering three million votes in the process (he would win New Hampshire in 1996, as well).

The Emcee’s opening words reveal a major argument for the evening: the constant warfare between reality and illusion. The importance of illusion to the point of self-delusion is illustrated throughout the show, beginning with the opening song: “And now—the Cabaret Girls! Each and every one a virgin. You don’t believe me?” (Kander 4). Each character will cling to his or her illusions throughout the musical, despite the ever-increasing difficulty in believing anything at face value, even sexuality and gender.

The Emcee's sexuality and gender were called into question in the 1966 production, but more dialogue was added to "Willkommen" in the Mendes' production to emphasize his pansexuality. With his too-much makeup, notice was taken during the work's original run of his gender-bending, but his queer behavior was primarily limited to his odd makeup and his appearance in drag at the beginning of Act II. Drag has long been a nightclub staple, so it seems that the primary queering in this moment came from two specifics: that the audience was not aware for a long while that one of the "Cabaret girls" is in fact the Emcee. More importantly, this drag was associated with Nazism through his "coming out" as a male just as the chorus line begins goose-stepping. The Emcee's pansexual qualities must thus be linked (unintentionally or not) to Nazism (and not just in the revival, as suggested by Mark Steyn in *The New Criterion*). Susan Sontag wrote in 1974 about the erotic co-opting of Nazi paraphernalia and uniforms by contemporary sexualities; *Cabaret* was using this mechanism as early as 1966, although the device seems to become more obvious and full-throated with each new incarnation of the piece. Of course, for an audience member to find any of this erotic implicates him or her even further into the extremely disturbing world of *Cabaret*.

The revival continues this trend, with not only the above-mentioned queer references, but with more overt onstage sexuality, as well as the Emcee being all things to all people. This version ends with him in a concentration camp, "sporting both a yellow star and a pink triangle" (Copeland 89). Is he gay, bisexual or heterosexual? Jewish or Nazi (sympathizer)? This postmodern identification with so many specifics allows most in the audience to feel the shock of identification at some point.

Each of the characters is introduced in much the same manner: their first appearances contain most—if not all—the audience will need to know about them. Cliff is first seen asleep on the train; he sleeps through much of his life, and a major solo is entitled “Why Should I Wake Up?” Since Cliff is the title character of the Van Druten play, and the nominal hero in all the story’s versions, he acts as the audience’s stand-in. Like him, we too are watching events unfold onstage in front of us.⁷⁰ This means a relaxation until such time as audiences are faced with something horrific that puts them squarely on the defensive and placed in the position of realizing how easy it is to abdicate responsibility and become complacent.

The other characters have their meaningful introductions, as well. Fraulein Schneider cannot take risks, a trait that will keep her from marriage by the end of the show; her opening song (“So What?”) contains the line: “You learn how to settle for what you get” in the repeated chorus (12). Sally enters with “Don’t Tell Mama,” a song about secrets and money, her two defining characteristics.⁷¹

Herr Schultz identifies himself as Jewish when he wishes Cliff “*mazel* in the the New Year” (16). When Cliff questions the word’s meaning, Schultz replies that it is “Jewish.” (16). Like Mordecai Lyons and Ali Hakim, he too is a merchant. He also understands how important appearances are to Fraulein Schneider, although he cannot see past exteriorities when it comes to saving his own life. When Fraulein Kost, a prostitute, sees him departing from Fraulein Schneider’s room, she refers to the two women being “sisters under the skin.” In order to save Fraulein Schneider’s reputation, Schultz imparts the news that the couple is to be married, a surprise to Fraulein Schneider (68).

⁷⁰ Hence the original play title *I Am A Camera*, as the character simply records the events around him.

The two duets between the couple, “The Pineapple Song” and “Married,” are sung on either side of this scene. The first harks directly back to Weill and Brecht not only in its sound and orchestration, but even in its title. Broadway musical songs typically take their titles from lines within the song; Weill and Brecht labeled their songs “The Army Song” and “Alabama Song.” Weill was also fond of unusual instruments, which contributed to Brecht’s alienation effect, and the one he used to great effect in his own works was a steel guitar, which gives a Hawaiian flavor to this particular song. Most importantly, it aids in subverting the longstanding stereotype of Jews as exotic,⁷² as Herr Schultz is anything but glamorous. He cannot even eat the exotic fruit he sells because “frankly, it would give me gas” (51). This subversion comes about through the very musical association of exoticism.

While Schultz is not part of “The Money Song,” it foreshadows in its own manner the ending of all the relationships in the musical, including his. There are two versions of this song, both of which state a major theme of the show—the equation of love and money—but it is the one written for the film in order to include Sally which states baldly “when hunger comes to rap, / Rat-a-tat, rat-a-tat, at the window. . . . / See how love flies out the door” (Ebb “1998” 7-28). Fraulein Schneider and Sally will both opt for the choice in which their financial security is not at risk.

Schultz figures prominently in the next two songs, “Married” and “Meeskite.” The first is a duet with Fraulein Schneider sung, prophetically, with each singer in a different room. The lyric contains an ominous phrase in the first verse:

⁷¹ It is indicative of the many secrets mentioned in the song (including sexuality) that a popular gay piano bar in New York is named “Don’t Tell Mama.”

⁷² See Erdman, pp. 25-27.

How the world can change,
It can change like that
Due to one little word—
Married (70).

It will indeed change for this couple because of one other word: “Jew.”⁷³ It is only when a stone accompanied by antisemitic taunts is thrown through Schultz’ shop window that the audience may begin to suspect that this marriage will not take place. “Meeskite” occurs during the engagement party for the couple. Before the song, Ernst enters, apologizing for his tardiness; Fraulein Schneider replies, tellingly, “One does what one must” (78), presumably as much a response to his working for the Nazis as his lateness.

There is immense irony when Herr Schultz is disconcerted enough by “two boys dancing together” at the party (78) that he stops all dancing entirely. Not only will the song he then sings to fill the void prove to be his undoing (and the undoing of his proposed marriage), but both Jews and homosexuals will become Hitler’s targets for extermination. It is this song/word—“Meeskite”—that betrays his Jewish heritage to the Nazi guests; Ernst leaves immediately, stopping only to warn Fraulein Schneider about associating with a Jew. As the scene ends, the Emcee enters for a brief moment and “the fruit shop vanishes” (84), just as Herr Schultz and millions of others, will vanish. Immediately before this disappearance, Schultz is seen laughing with Sally, “unaware of what is happening” (84). Schultz is perhaps the clearest-eyed character in the story, except when it comes to his own safety.

Fraulein Schneider’s response to the rising Nazi threat is telling. She is “frightened” at what she sees happening. “One can no longer dismiss the Nazis. Because suddenly they are my friends and neighbors” (89). The fact that those the Nazis

⁷³ Or “Nazi.”

persecute are also her friends and neighbors does not occur to her; after all, *they* are powerless. Schultz responds to her concerns with such sincerity that she is almost persuaded to stay with him, until the rock crashes through his window. Schultz believes it was “nothing! Children on their way to school! Mischievous children! Nothing more! . . . You understand?” (90). Fraulein Schneider understands all too well, as does the audience.

Schultz appears one more time. He, like Cliff, is leaving Berlin, but only to travel to another city in order to spare Fraulein Schneider’s feelings. Though Cliff tries to persuade him to emigrate to America, the fruit vendor tells the young writer that the present troubles will pass: “I *know* I am right! Because I understand the Germans . . . After all, what am *I*? A German” (108). Just as later, American Jews would face the problem of whether they were Americans or Jews first (see Shapiro, 137), German Jews have a history of laying claim “not only to German Kultur and thus identity but also to the right to maintain their Jewish identity.” They have also historically “cultivated a love of the German landscape that was no less passionate than that of other Germans” (Mendes-Flohr, 12-13). Schultz, like many of his Jewish countrymen, knows himself a German, despite Hitler’s protests to the contrary.⁷⁴

There are three particular musical moments in *Cabaret* that increasingly amplify both the Nazis’ attitudes and that force the audience into recognition of its own antisemitism. As Copeland states in his article about Mendes’ revival, “it makes us fully complicit with what goes on.” The original production famously began with a lowered upstage mirror reflecting the audience to themselves, rather than the more traditional

⁷⁴ Leo Frank, in *Parade*, will grapple with a similar difficulty regarding geographical location and ethnic heritage.

show curtain. The show is about *us*, about our complicity with the prejudices and injustices that daily surround us, and it shows us how grotesquely far those prejudices can lead if left unchecked.

The first of these three implicative songs is the Act I anthem “Tomorrow Belongs To Me.” In the 1966 stage version, it was sung by the waiters at the Kit Kat Klub, beginning with a high (and by inference, young) male tenor voice. The Mendes revival introduces the song via the Emcee listening to a recording of the song sung a capella by “a sweet-voiced boy soprano,” with the tight spotlight on the turntable eventually iris-ing outward to include the entire stage by the end (Copeland 88). In both instances, the images and sounds of youthful male innocence are utilized as part of the song’s musical arrangement. Of course, the Hitler Youth contained just such young and pure-voiced men and boys as these singers, and the reprise of the song by the older party (some of whom are wearing swastikas) at the Act I Finale emphasizes the knowledge that this innocence and beauty have been co-opted by the Nazis as the audience realizes that the song is indeed a Nazi hymn. The first-time listener cannot help but be seduced by the song and its arrangement; by the time s/he has realized it is a Nazi hymn, it is too late and s/he must pull back out from the initial reaction.

Act II begins with an emblematic number, a dance by the cabaret girls. It is only as the number nears its end that the audience discovers that one of these dancers is the Emcee in full drag. The emphasis is once again on deceptive appearance, and the fluid gender of the Emcee is once again underscored. However, this is another implicative moment: audiences enjoy the number and react happily to their learning that the Emcee

is one of these chorus girls, until the final moments when the chorus goose-steps offstage. Once again, the audience's enjoyment and amusement have been used against them.

"If You Could See Her Through My Eyes" is almost certainly the most problematic song for many audience members, and has been since *Cabaret* was originally in previews. Fred Ebb recalls that he had a dream concerning Joel Grey and a gorilla in a tutu, only afterward writing a song to fit the image. "It was him, of course, loving this gorilla. And at the end he said 'And if you could see her through my eyes, she wouldn't look Jewish at all.' So the song could serve to show how anti-Semitism was creeping in" (Landmark Symposium 19-20). The audience response showed the creators they were on the right track:

We opened with it. It got an amazing reaction from the audience, because they did laugh, and then they kind of realized what they were laughing at, and they would stop laughing. There was sort of a polite hand. It made them very nervous, which is exactly what Hal wanted. I must say that it was exciting to me to put the audience in that frame of mind, because we were building, after all, to a climax here. I mean, everybody knew the ending of this story. So everything that happened had a lot of weight. (Landmark Symposium 20).

Unfortunately for the creative team, audiences misinterpreted the song, reacting to it as if it were meant to be sympathetic to the Nazis. They received one letter from a rabbi who stated that "'the graves of six million Jews were pleading for us not to do this.' The fear became great that the show would never sell "over *one* lyric line, so the line we changed it to was 'She isn't a meeskite at all.' Everybody was made very unhappy about that" (Landmark Symposium 20).

The song was intended to function in the sharpest manner possible in the style of the earlier portions of the musical, to cause the audience to realize "how easily you could fall into the trap of prejudice" (Landmark Symposium 21). The song incriminates all

who listen to it; audiences know the Emcee is an unsettling and alarming character by this point, yet the number initially delights. Its dreadfulness is apparent only too late, just as Hitler's was. The personal implications for the audience are *meant* to disturb them.

The song itself pulls out all stops for its initial appeal. It is a sweet, romantic, slow song, complete with a waltz for the pair during the dance break. Kander and Ebb exploit the clichés of romantic love songs for all they are worth; of course, like all the cabaret songs, this one works as commentary on the previous scene. Just as this gorilla and the Emcee can never be together because they “hear society moan,” Fraulein Schneider and Herr Schultz cannot marry, either.

Cabaret's score is remarkable on several levels. There is the strong similarity to Weill in many of the songs. The instrumentation and accompaniment will allude to Weill as much as anything else; for example, the repetition and minor-key accompaniment of “Willkommen” (including a banjo as part of the orchestration) are very reminiscent of the sound accompanying “Pirate Jenny” from *Der Dreigroschenoper*. This similarity is significant in two ways.

John Kander has said that some of the reviews accused him of writing “watered-down Kurt Weill.” He protests that he had listened to “records of German jazz and German cabaret songs of the Twenties. . . . [W]hen we came to writing the songs, I didn't think in terms of writing pastiche or imitations. Somehow or other, the flavor had soaked in just enough” (Landmark Symposium 24). The fact that the music *does* sound much like Weill is due at least as much to the fact that Weill's is the music audiences' know from 1920s Berlin.

Weill's music *is*, in a way, the sound of 1920s Berlin. *The Threepenny Opera* was so beloved by the citizens of Berlin at that time that one pub played only the music from the work. Weill's connection—and that of his music—with the Nazis is even more pronounced: the Nazis dedicated an entire room to *The Threepenny Opera* in their museum of “Degenerate Music.” They ultimately had to close the room when it was discovered that the large crowds were in attendance simply to hear the recording over and over again (Hinton 58-59).

Kander also utilized traditional German dances in his music. The polka is Czech in origin, but has an affinity with Germany, and the dance appears as part of the score. Much of the music contains jazzy syncopations that are perfectly at home with popular music of late 1920s and early 1930s. The waltz, which developed from the German *ländler* in the eighteenth century, is represented in several songs, including “Tomorrow Belongs To Me” and the dance break in “If You Could See Her Through My Eyes.” The latter (excepting the dance break) is more overtly one of the two *schottisches* contained in the show. These two songs are, as mentioned above, extremely important to the show's implication of the viewer as antisemitic.

The score as a whole is based heavily on one particular figure:



Figure 3.1: Cabaret Figure.

This pattern is featured (in some way) in all but one song, which gives the score a wonderful musical unity, particularly as the orchestral sound changes from Weill to

“Broadway” and back again. The one song which does not include this figure is “Tomorrow Belongs To Me,” another musical number confronting the audience with their implicit prejudices. Not only is the musical figure above absent from this song, but the sound and style of it are quite different from the rest of the show, particularly the hymnlike version first heard.

This musical pattern contains half-step differences that allow an easy transition between parallel major and minor keys,⁷⁵ which allows for a minor flavoring even in major keys. One representative example of this is the opening number, “Willkommen.” It is actually in B-flat major, but its opening accompanimental figures have a minor aspect, centering around the B-flat itself. Instead of a simple B-flat chord, Kander adds the upper sixth so often present in the score. This sixth is a G, which makes the opening chord either a I⁶ or a vi⁷; this latter is a G-minor chord⁷⁶ with a seventh added.



Figure 3.2: Opening chords from “Willkommen.”

In either case, there is a minor texture to the chord that effectively muddies the ease with which we hear the song. This minor sound continually breaks through as the score

⁷⁵ According to Swain, this movement between parallel major and minor is relatively rare in Western music. Cole Porter uses a similar idea for the musical-within-a-play in *Kiss Me, Kate* (Swain, Chapter 6). What it accomplishes for that show is placement of the music as “Shakespearian.” In other words, the sound recalls 16th-century music, even as Porter irony disrupts the sound with his 20th-century invention. While Swan never openly says so, he seems to suggest that this parallelism echoes the wonderfully parallel structure of *Kiss Me, Kate*’s interlocking stories. The libretto for *Cabaret* has a number of similar mirrorings: parallel couples and a distinctly period/pastiche sound. Whether this is intentional is up to the reader to decide.

unfolds. It establishes the “Jewish-minor key” connection, but more importantly, it illustrates musically the continued breaking through of the audience’s knowledge of history into overt perception.

“This is Not Over Yet:” *Parade*

Parade, with book by Alfred Uhry and score by Jason Robert Brown, opened at the Vivian Beaumont Theatre in Lincoln Center on December 17, 1998. It ran for only eighty-four performances; the primary reason given for its failure was the declaration of bankruptcy of its production company, Livent, amid “allegations of financial improprieties” (Grove 37).⁷⁷ There had been plans for an open-ended run at a commercial Broadway house, but between the financial problems surrounding the musical and a negative review from the *New York Times*, these plans dissipated. The piece did have a small national tour, however, and its recording—which almost did not happen—sold “exceptionally well” (Grove 38), particularly for a musical that ran under three months.

As has been briefly discussed above, the 1960s saw a separation of the mutuality that had been in existence between Jews and African Americans. Even as “intrawhite racialization was falling out of fashion,” the postwar era resolidified racialization between white and non-white (Brodkin 50):

Postwar Jewishness propounded by these male intellectuals celebrated its resonance with this mainstream. The virtues and rewards that they claimed for themselves as good Jewish sons depended upon showing how

⁷⁶ The relative minor key for B-flat major is G minor.

⁷⁷ Grove quotes Alfred Uhry, the book writer, and Christopher Manos (producer of Atlanta’s Theatre of the Stars, as believing this to be the primary reason for the show’s failure.

similar Jewish culture was to bourgeois cultural ideals and upon differentiating Jewish culture from a depraved and unworthy African American culture. (Brodkin 150)⁷⁸

By the premiere of *Parade*, Jews were considered part of the hegemonic population (Brodkin) and the musical used the Frank case to examine the interdependence and problematic relationship between Jews and African-Americans. The relationship(s) between the two groups continues to be challenging, and is made up of a “constant shifting of gears” (Melnick 132). The 1990s, the end of which saw the premiere of *Parade*, saw a great deal of this gear shifting. Throughout the decade, Louis Farrakhan made antisemitic pronouncements. Significantly, a series of disturbances in New York in 1991 came to be known as the Crown Heights riots. Often described as a “race riot,” these confrontations pitted African-Americans against Jews and vice versa. In a larger context, America’s “multicultural” face has ensured that minorities now clamor for affirmation; the increased competition for recognition has made historically problematic relationships such as this one even more challenging.

Parade is based on the true story of Leo Frank, a Jewish northerner who in 1913 was accused of murdering Mary Phagan, a 13-year-old employee in the pencil factory where he worked. Because of substantial uncertainty regarding his guilt, the governor of Georgia commuted Leo’s death sentence to life imprisonment, although he was lynched before any new evidence could ever be presented. Leo’s story has been told many times, by many people, and from both sides of the case. The first music written about Frank was sung by Fiddlin’ John Carson (himself a character in the musical who sings his songs on

⁷⁸ This of course connects back to Jud in *Oklahoma!* as the “black” figure—heavily sexualized, violent, and enacting a servant’s status.

the courthouse steps), which may have been performed as early as 1915 (Melnick, Chapter 1).

The musical examines Frank through a series of Confederate Memorial Day parades, emphasizing the engrained tradition and his complete inability to fit in: he is Other ethnically as well as geographically, a Yankee in a proudly Southern area. Mary, in town for the parade, goes to the pencil factory for her wages and is never seen again until the discovery of her dead body. Leo is accused of her murder and Act I ends with his trial and the eventual verdict of “guilty.” Act II details his wife Lucille’s increasing frustration at Leo’s inability to allow her to help him in his appeals; after he finally agrees to her assistance, Lucille speaks with Governor Slaton, who eventually commutes Leo’s death sentence to life imprisonment. He is taken from his cell by a lynch mob, and is hanged from the tree which has hung suspended over much of the evening’s stage action. Given the true-life nature of the story, the shape Uhry and Brown give the narrative is the growth of the love between Leo and Lucille.

Reviewers continue to misconstrue *Parade* as anti-Southern (Grove 39). Much as the creators of *Cabaret* were accused of antisemitism through a credible portrayal of antisemitic characters, so too has *Parade* been accused of bigotry against the South, despite the fact that Alfred Uhry is a Georgia native, and despite there being only one character who spouts anti-southern chauvinism. The problem arises when this character is both a musical’s lead and a character with whom we are obviously meant to sympathize; Leo is terribly unsympathetic at the play’s beginning, with little time or emotion for the citizenry of Atlanta or even his own wife. It is only with the passage of

time and his emotional growth that the audience begins to care for him; by that point, he has clearly accepted the South as his home.

Jeffrey Melnick, in his book *Black-Jewish Relations on Trial*,⁷⁹ states that he wishes to “trace how Frank’s story and image have been fought over—by Jewish Americans, African Americans, and other Americans—and what these fights have to tell us not only about Leo Frank but also about Black-Jewish relations (and race and sexuality more broadly) in America culture” (4-5). Yet he misses completely most of the treatment of these very themes in *Parade*, rejecting the piece as “pandering” and “offensive” (20-21). He denies the clearly intended linkage between post-Civil War Southerners and American Jews: “After the Civil War, Urhy’s script suggests, southerners became the Israelites of the United States, forced off the land they loved so dearly” (20). The only time the musical concerns itself with this last point is when, during the trial, much is made of the necessity for Mrs. Phagan to take Mary out of school in order to move to town and work at the factory, and it is clear that this is because of her husband’s death. Edward Shapiro’s discussion of this Southern/Jewish dialectic seems far more pertinent than Melnick’s rejection of it:

Just as American Jews were confronted with the question of whether they were American Jews or Jewish Americans, so southern Jews (except for those living in southern Florida or northern Virginia) were confronted with the question of whether they were southern Jews or Jewish southerners. This matter of identity was complicated by the fact that the experiences of the southerner and the Jew were, in certain respects, similar. Both groups realized they once were viewed with some disdain by the rest of society. From the perspective of the Christian and the northerner, the Jew and the southerner were both part of exotic and even outlandish cultures. Anti-

⁷⁹ The book is singularly spiteful (and sometimes flat-out wrong) toward this musical more than any other version of the Frank story that he covers. He uses reasoning similar to others used by the academic critics discussed in Chapter One.

Semitism had its counterpart in the northern image of the South as a land of hookworm, ranting fundamentalist preachers, sheet-wearing bigots, and ignorant sharecroppers. Jews and southerners alike had strong memories of tragedy and defeat. (Shapiro 137)

Uhry is aware of this, as well. A citizen of Atlanta, he was aware that, in the aftermath of the Frank case, there was an outbreak of virulent antisemitism. During this time, a "group of Southern Jews were disenfranchised. They weren't Southern anymore," but were considered just Jews (Schleier n.p.).

Parade takes as its initial argument the very binary polarity/similarity between Southerners and Jews of which Shapiro speaks. By putting these “northern images of the South” in the mouth of Leo, the audience hears both sides of the debate at their most bigoted. It was Leo’s anti-Southern bias in the opening scenes of the show that critics commented upon with scorn; none of them seemed to realize that Uhry and Brown were setting up this parity on both sides of the prejudicial debate. It is in the character of Lucille that the team created someone who is both Southern and Jewish, and who is comfortable in each portion of herself; Leo will sing that he does not know what to do in response to “a wife who would prefer that I’d say / ‘Howdy!,’ not ‘Shalom!’” (44).

The musical is cyclical; three different Memorial Day parades are presented (hence the title), complete with three versions of the scene where Mary wishes Leo a “Happy Memorial Day.” The tree from which Leo will be hanged appears in several scenes, stretching over the stage from the very beginning of the show. The work is also bookended by two young men leaving for different wars. The cyclic nature of the work allows the audience continually to redefine its attitudes and responses to these situations and characters.

The opening song, “The Old Red Hills of Home,” accomplishes a great deal in its space. It originates the cyclic portion of the musical, beginning with a young Confederate soldier leaving for battle, and the song itself will recur throughout the show as a framing device. Musically, the song introduces the audience to Brown’s compositional techniques.⁸⁰ This song also employs a bitonal clash of differing songs performed simultaneously by two distinct groups as the parade begins. This bitonality will appear during numerous points in the musical as a means of effectively conveying dramatic tension and conflict. Such polytonality is subversive in itself, harking back to works such as Charles Ives’ “Putnam’s Camp.”⁸¹ In both cases there is a subversion of patriotic bias, as American patriotic parade music becomes literally discordant; this subversion is made more particular as the music becomes cacophonous in relation to other, similar, music. In *Parade*, it is the Memorial Day parade music itself that is dissonant with the music of “The Old Red Hills of Home.” As such, Memorial Day and its parades will be shown as progressively less congenial. On another level, opening songs from more “traditional” musicals are usually employed to bring the audience into the world of the musical. To begin a work by challenging the patriotic music utilized by the characters who operate this world is unusual, as well as a magnificent dramatico-musical method of beginning *Parade*’s discussion of its issues. This subversive musical and dramatic dissonance will also occur during Mary’s funeral; Frankie Epp’s reaction to her death includes this same multi-tonal clashing of two songs. In this case, one is the traditional hymn “There Is a Fountain” that interacts shrilly with Frankie’s vow of

⁸⁰ Like Sondheim, he utilizes an accompanimental ostinato which can sometimes make harmonic movement difficult to discern. He employs this ostinato to explore character as the show progresses.

⁸¹ Ives used the effect to recall a moment from his youth when two different bands, each playing different patriotic songs, approached the town square from different directions.

revenge. Finally, as Act I ends with a verdict of “guilty” from the jury, “The “Old Red Hills of Home” recurs, once again discordantly with the “celebratory” cakewalk as the town rejoices in the verdict. In each case, a moment that would traditionally be seen as supportive of the hegemony (whether antisemitic or not) is undercut musically.⁸² These discordances also tend to undercut the theme of assimilation; if the town cannot even agree musically, how can they agree philosophically?

Leo is introduced after this first parade as “reserved, a bit stiff” (43); he will not even return the flirtation of Lucille, his wife, and is incapable even of speaking of the two starting a family. Lucille must supply the words, which she does, teasing: “Procreate. It’s not a dirty word, Leo. It’s all over the Bible” (44). Leo blushes, leaving for the factory, despite the fact that the rest of the town is taking a holiday.

After he arrives at the office, he sings a duet with Lucille, although they are in separate places on different parts of the stage. He begins “What Am I Waiting For?” as he takes inventory at the factory. Musically, this song establishes exactly how different he is from those around him. Leo’s ostinato is one repeated note, underscoring his monothematic personality;⁸³ he follows a problem to its end, and he persists in one outlook until he is forced to seek other options.

⁸² The use of this particular song at this moment also re-emphasizes that this may be home for most of the population, but is not for Leo.

⁸³ This is opposed to the energetic, restless one underlying “The Old Red Hills of Home.” Though Leo has made slighting comments about his surroundings, his music immediately differentiates him from the rest of the citizenry.

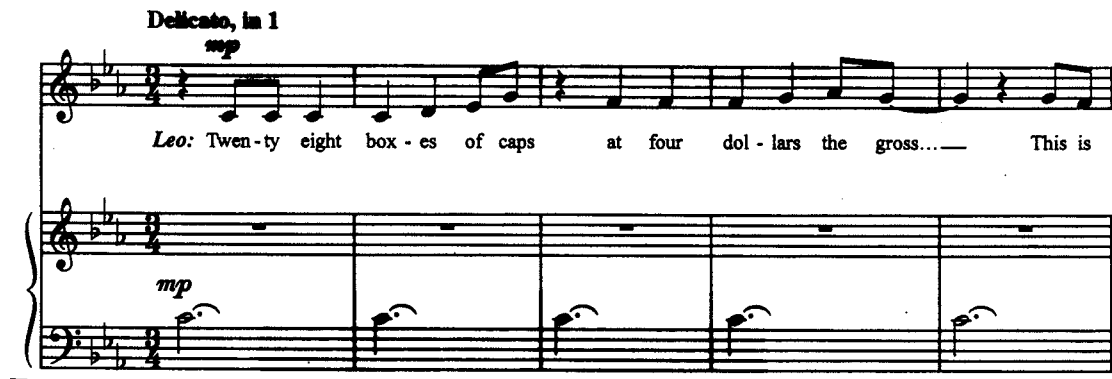


Figure 3.3: Opening bars of “What Am I Waiting For?”

It is likely that “How Can I Call This Home?,” the song Leon sings on the way to the office, is the song that created most of the furor over the work’s supposed anti-Southern bias. Leo insults the South repeatedly, and the stage directions instruct the crowd to conduct themselves in a manner which leads to sympathy for Leo. But this is Leo’s *impression* of the South, not verisimilitude. Even if it is reality, it is not nearly as bad as Leo believes, but more as any large crowd might behave: pushing, shoving, and spitting. Leo is blinded by his sense of not belonging: “These people make me tense. / I live in fear they’ll start a conversation. . . . / It’s like a foreign land. / I didn’t understand / That being Southern’s not just being in the South” (44). When Grode states that “Atlantans may have some problems with the way their city is presented,” (39), he quotes the beginning of the song’s next verse: “These men belong in zoos, / It’s like they never joined civilization” (44). Leo is still reacting to being Other: “With ev’ry word it’s very clear / I don’t belong” (44). Part of this Otherness springs from difference in language. In the Franks’ first scene together, Leo uses the word “*meshuggenah*” and is chastised by Lucille for using “foreign words,” and he sings of not being able to say “howdy” instead of “shalom.” Leo does not simply detest his Southern home; he misses

Brooklyn with the same fierce intensity that informs the Georgians singing of “The Old Red Hills of Home.” He is no different from them in substance.

Leo will experience this culture clash repeatedly; his attorney begins the consultation by telling him he must “act more like a good ole boy” (50). Moreover, it is this very cultural divergence that provides a musical clue as to Leo’s guilt or innocence during his trial. Three young women from the pencil factory testify as to Leo’s constant sexual invitations to them (a clear reference back to the traditional stereotype of the oversexed Jewish male). During their repetitive, albeit eerily beautiful, chant-like testimony, a fictionalized Leo joins in, singing “Come Up To My Office.” During the production, Brent Carver hopped up onto the table, sliding easily around to move behind the girls. This opening movement was important, for it immediately identified *this* Leo—athletic, free, and easy—as distinct from the one previously seen. The music achieves much the same thing, in a jazzy style and with a far more interesting ostinato than the “real” Leo’s music; the lyric adds to these indications, being full of colloquialisms such as “don’tcha” and “honey” as a designation for the girls.

Immediately after the audience meets Mary Phagan on a streetcar, they hear “What Am I Waiting For?,” a duet between the Franks—significantly, Leo and Lucille sing in different locations about different issues. Leo begins the song as he pores over the factory accounts. Again, his ostinato accompaniment is a single repeated note, which becomes more filled in only when Lucille joins him in the song. The song is interrupted by Mary’s entrance into Leo’s office, asking for her pay. It is this final moment of their scene together which will replay twice more. Not only does her wish for Leo to have a “Happy Memorial Day” ring out as a poignant reminder of her life and personality, but it

acts as postmodern irony: Leo's story *is* being memorialized for us, onstage. Ironically, of course, Leo's Memorial Day—and his memorialization—are anything but “happy.”

Jewish male sexuality has long been a contested site. The stage Jew often proves to be effeminate or sexually abnormal. This

image of feminized, perverse Jewish masculinity has a long European tradition. . . . [Jewish males'] desire for money is routinely linked to unnatural lust, which is routinely thwarted either by his own cowardice or by the heroism of more 'manly' gentile characters. . . .(Erdman 26-27)⁸⁴

It is during the final moments of Leo's life that one final reference to his (perverse) sexuality appears. He is kidnapped from his jail cell in his nightshirt and is quite concerned that he will be exposed when he is hanged, asking for a belt. While some might construe this as natural modesty, Melnick suggests that the creators of *Parade* constructed a “normal” Leo to counteract the charges at the time of his trial that he was either sexually “feminized” or that he was sexually perverse.⁸⁵ Albert Lindemann emphasizes that “what caused special excitement in the Frank case were intimations of sexual deviance on his part. (He had allegedly killed Mary when she refused to give into demands for ‘perverse’ sex.)” (Lindemann 381). This latter is referenced in the musical during the trial when, during Jim Conley's testimony, he volunteers that Leo had frequent young female visitors to his office; according to this testimony, these visitors included at least one pair of women, as well as a “young colored gentleman from New Jersey” (55). Tom Watson will call him a “pervert sodomite” as part of his blanket condemnation of Leo (60). These stories of course not only echo the charges that in actuality did occur around the Frank trial, but manage to put a perverse sexual spin on Leo that becomes part

⁸⁴ So positioning Leo's meeting with Mary over his scrutinizing the accounts adds to the furor.

⁸⁵ Given that this is one of the traditional stereotypes for Jewish males, there does not have to be any sort of truth to these ideas.

of the hysteria surrounding him, as well as playing directly into the exotic sexual stereotype of the Jewish male.

The binary opposites that have traditionally made up the stereotypes of Jewish male sexuality are both given full play in *Parade*, with the result that each subverts the other. From the beginning of the musical, when Leo cannot even bring himself to discuss starting a family with Lucille, we are given a picture of a man uncomfortable with overt sexuality. This uneasiness is positioned against the sexuality of the African American characters, particularly that of Tom Conley. His song “Feel The Rain Fall” is quite sexual in its imagery. It is no doubt unsurprising that a chain gang’s song might be sexual in nature. However, much suspicion has been thrown onto Conley in the trial, and the musical hints at a possible sexual aspect of the crime, as well. So the positioning of Conley as the only character who sings of sex is important.

I’m gonna rise like sunshine
If I see her turn
I’m gonna rise like sunshine
I’m gonna set down on her
And feel the sun burn. (63).

There are other significant references to Leo’s sexuality. Toward the end of Act II, Lucille visits Leo after Governor Slaton has commuted his sentence and sent him to a state prison. Lucille visits him, setting out a picnic lunch as the two pretend they are outside; as part of their fantasy, the audience sees the prison walls fly away. The tree that haunts the musical appears once more as part of this idyllic pasture; in this instance, it is a function of Leo’s giving himself to Lucille: “He clutches her to him and they kiss. She leans her head back and he lowers her to the ground—the tree begins to cast a shadow over them—a long, beautiful shadow in greens and gold, and as they make love the

shadow grows and envelopes the whole stage” (67). Afterward, Leo tells Lucille “I love you” for the first time (in the audience’s hearing).

Of course, *Parade* concerns itself with specific instances of antisemitism, as well. And just as *Cabaret* does, it implicates the audience into facing its own bigotry by pointing out how easy it is to fall into the trap of prejudice. Mrs. Phagan’s trial testimony is a specific case in point: “My Child Will Forgive Me” is a lullaby of extraordinary melodic beauty and sadness. The final lines pull us from the deep sympathy we have been feeling with Mrs. Phagan into a chilling realization of the prejudice the song embodies.

My child will be watchin’ me,
Givin’ me faith
In a future that’s golden and new.
My Mary will teach me
To open my heart,
And so I forgive you,
Jew. (55).

The last word resonates in a stunning song that has pulled the audience into complete and total sympathy for the singer. It is delivered as a harsh epithet, wholly removed from the melody that went before, and so the audience must repudiate its alliance with Mrs. Phagan and deal with its own complicities in the antisemitism that ends the song so strikingly. Their culpability becomes even stronger because the authors present a stridently antisemitic character, Tom Watson as a contrast to the other characters. Watson, the editor of *The Jeffersonian*, writes of the trial that “Hugh Dorsey was not fooled by the slippery Jew’s oily demeanor. He took one look at Leo Frank’s bulging satyr eyes and protruding sensual lips and nailed him for the pervert sodomite he is.” Immediately after this, he discusses an article in the next issue, “entitled ‘Jesus Was Not

A Jew”” (60). With such an obvious villain to root against, it is relatively easy to fall into sympathy with others who are just as antisemitic, but perhaps more likeable and less severe.

Leo’s Otherness is emphasized throughout the musical, by himself as well as others. Craig Britt, a reporter for the local paper, is conscious of how important Leo’s alien qualities are, even if only to his own career: “All I needed was a snippy, pissy Yankee all along! / Take this superstitious city, add one little Jew from Brooklyn / Plus a college education . . .” (50). The story eventually outraces Britt’s control, as the rumors increase to the point of indecipherability during by the song’s end.

Leo is placed as Other not only by virtue of his heritage, but simply by geographical location. In fact, he refuses to assimilate even when it is possible. Despite the obvious similarities between prejudices against Southerners and Jews (see Shapiro, above), Leo continues to exhibit much the same bigotry against his fellow citizens as they exhibit against him. In response to his attorney’s comment that “people know everything there is to know about your case,” Leo replies, “I don’t mean Southern people. I mean real people.” This is only seconds after he calls the townspeople “redneck savages” (58). The song “Where Will You Stand When the Flood Comes” is a gospel-flavored song led by Tom Watson, which uses the iconic sound of Southern gospel music for yet more subversive and ironic commentary. The lyric continually links Jews with evil, utilizing the word “Jew” as an epithet analogous to the end of Mrs. Phagan’s lullaby. Once again, there is a musical discord that ends the song, discord that not only mirrors the mob’s judgments, but which is wholly dark and frightening.

There is a stronger subversion of traditional antisemitism in this musical than might otherwise be expected. By contrasting Christian signifiers with anti-Jewish expressions by the Christians themselves, the intolerance is subverted even further.⁸⁶ Governor Slaton, in commuting Leo's sentence, is aware of the antisemitism inherent in the case: "Two thousand years ago, another governor washed his hands and turned a Jew over to a mob. Ever since then, that governor's name has been a curse. . . . If today another Jew went to his grave because I failed to do my duty, I would all my life find his blood on my hands" (64-65). As the mob prepares to lynch Leo, their dialogue contains a constant use of "Jesus" as epithet, similar to the manner in which "Jew" has been utilized earlier in the musical.

Of course, Leo does eventually become a Southerner, at least within his own parameters. He begins to realize that home is where Lucille and his love are located. When he is sent to a state prison after his sentence is commuted, he is seen in "prison farm work clothes—rough shirt, overalls. Somehow, he looks comfortable in his own skin for the first time" (66). He has in fact learned to be comfortable not only with himself but with his surroundings. Upon his wife's entrance, he exclaims "Lucille! Hey!" This "hey" sounds peculiarly Southern coming from Leo, particularly when followed by his next line, in response to a question: "I reckon" (66). Their duet during this scene contains an ostinato figure that is expansive and covers an octave range, far different than his previous one-note figures: Leo has assimilated as both husband and Southerner, and his new openness is mirrored in the accompaniment.

⁸⁶ It also further imbrogates Leo's and audience's bigotries.



Figure 3.4: Opening bars of “All the Wasted Time.”

Finally, before Leo is hanged, he displays for the first time a distinctly religious response to the events around him. He speaks of God, of being chosen “for a reason,” and his final words are the singing of the “Sh’ma Yisroel,” the traditional prayer calling Jews to community. As always, Brown utilizes music to strengthen a dramatic point: Leo sings the ancient words to the melody of “The Old Red Hills of Home,” showing that he has become as much a part of the South as anyone else. He has certainly found a home with Lucille. The tune continues into Lucille’s last song, as she sings to Leo’s spirit to not worry—“I’ll be fine here, you’ll see. . . . You’re here by the door / And you’re holding my arm / And you’re stroking my hair / And you’re finally free” (68). Leo’s death becomes tragic in this context; he has become as much a part of the community as his killers, and we have journeyed with him, but knowledge and acceptance have come too late. Mordecai Lyons is never fully able to integrate himself into the community, nor is Jud; Leo is able to do so, and it is this too-late quality that allows the audience to cry for him as they never do for the others.

Jeffrey Melnick asserts that, in order to create Lucille, who has assimilated both “Jew” and “Southerner,” Urhy and Brown have had to “more or less—wipe African Americans off the board” (20). The true achievement of *Parade* is to triangulate Leo as Other *between* the African Americans and the white characters who populate his story.

In actuality, the show deliberately places African American servants in every scene where Governor Slaton discusses the case. Much more significantly, Act II contains a song near its beginning that establishes the African-American response to the problems and perceptions that have been established during Act I. Lyrically, “A Rumblin’ and a Rollin’” positions this portion of the population in relation to both the earlier events and to the white characters: “I can tell you this, as a matter of fact, / That the local hotels wouldn’t be so packed / If a little black girl had gotten attacked” (59). The singers also note that “There’s a black man swingin’ in ev’ry tree / But they don’t never pay attention!” (59). One of the most interesting things about this song is that the rhythmic line accompanying it is a variant of that which underlies “The Old Red Hills of Home.” In other words, Brown has musically united the town’s inhabitants; for once, both white and African-American population speak with a united voice. Each has found a common Other.



Figure 3.5: Accompanimental rhythm of “The Old Red Hills of Home.”



Figure 3.6: Accompanimental rhythm of “A Rumblin’ and a Rollin’.”

Melnick also avers that Conley’s “two big numbers in the show . . . [are] . . . basically ‘Ol Man River’ on steroids: voicing general protest against white racism, the songs do nothing to specify Conley’s place in the racist labor system of the New South”

(22). This is patently untrue.⁸⁷ Conley, in particular, consistently shows the audience that he plays a character for the benefit of the white citizenry. It begins when the prosecutor questions him regarding Conley's not finishing his time on a chain gang: "You know what that makes you, don't you?" Conley responds: "Lucky?" (51). The actor in the original production used this word to convey a world of meaning, much of which remains on the original cast album. There is a strong element of clowning for those in charge, as a method of survival. Conley is also obviously performing for the courtroom during his testimony. He has on a new suit; in fact, the stage directions say "he presents a far different picture from the ragtag vagrant we saw previously, . . . [with] a well-tailored summer suit, and a neat shirt and tie which he wears well. He walks to the stand slowly, sort of like a runway model" (55). The song he sings, "That's What He Said," is lively and jazzy. Again, delivery manages to suggest a great deal of this, but Conley is obviously having a great deal of fun presenting his testimony.

"A Rumblin' and a Rollin'" particularly positions this playacting and the African-American "place in the racist labor system of the New South" as the group sings "They gonna come through this town— / We better keep our heads down— / We better start mumblin' and shufflin' / We better polish our smiles. . . ." (58). As a concluding commentary, Conley hums a snatch of "Camptown Races" as he goes to sleep; these characters know exactly how much "acting" they must do in their lives. Like Ali Hakim in *Oklahoma!*, Conley will survive through this self-knowledge. "Camptown Races" is from a minstrel show, in which white males played African-Americans, and in which their entire racial heritage was stolen and mocked. Conley shows his awareness of his

⁸⁷ And is erroneous, as well. Melnick completely ignores Conley's only solo number, "That's What He Said," and calls these two songs the character's "big numbers." "A Rumblin' and a Rollin'" is a quartet

position in the white community by singing it. As a final detail, Angela “is humming ‘The Old Red Hills of Home’ as the lights fade” (59). The harmony between black and white is complete in this moment, even as the differences are fully delineated. This, in fact, is an alternative to assimilation: acceptance of difference.

Conclusion

Jews have always been a part of American musical theatre, as creators, performers, and onstage characters. The treatment of musical stage Jews has undergone a change during this history, especially after World War II. While the earliest musicals with Jewish characters obviously attempted to be sympathetic (or at least more sympathetic than many other stage treatments), there is still an element of Jew as Other, simply for the exotic elements that were gained thereby. All four musicals examined in this chapter place their Jewish characters alongside the Christian community in order to allow the audience to see both the men’s Otherness, as well as to experience their aloneness. The title character in *Mordecai Lyons* was based on Shylock, but Harrigan and Braham obviously attempted to soften the negative stereotypical traits so pronounced in Shylock and his stage heirs. In fact, Mordecai conducts himself in a more “Christian” manner than his nemesis, Charles Chester, ever does. Mordecai only goes out of his way to hurt the other man because of his having wounded Esther, Mordecai’s daughter. Shylock, on the other hand, hates Antonio simply for the differences between them; Antonio is Christian. Chester is the one without remorse in *Mordecai Lyons*, particularly for his treatment of women. So too is Herr Schultz more “Christian” in his behavior than those Christians around him. Unlike those characters, he is unselfish and supportive of

although Conley does lead the chain gang during “Feel The Rain Fall.”

others; his major reason for leaving Berlin is not his own safety but his concern over Fraulein Schneider's emotional welfare.

Oklahoma! and *Parade* present Jews who deal with assimilationist issues more overtly than the other two. Ali Hakim, while not necessarily wishing to assimilate into the community, is made welcome when he decides to settle down.⁸⁸ Conversely, Leo only barely becomes a full member; he, like Ali, has never intended to do so. Since he cannot be as metatheatrical as Ali, he dies. Both *Oklahoma!* and *Parade* position the sexuality of their Jewish characters alongside that of their darker Others, Jud and Conley. The difference in the final disposition of these characters comes more from the conscious role-playing of Ali and Conley than anything else.

There is a definite stylistic change in the presentation of musical Jewish characters after World War II. The first two shows examined in this chapter, *Mordecai Lyons* and *Oklahoma!*, obviously attempted to portray these men as sympathetic Other. The latter two, *Cabaret* and *Parade*, along with the issues presented above, also place the audience members as surrogate characters, inserting the spectators themselves into the work as Other. (Simultaneously, they also place the audience as antisemitic, forcing them to react to their own inherent prejudices.) This difference may be due as much to the knowledge gained of war atrocities as it is to the rise of multiculturalism; it is perhaps no longer possible to present historical examinations of Jews without the Holocaust overshadowing the work, with the possible exception of comedies. Certainly musicals such as *Fiddler on the Roof* (1965) and *The Rothschilds* (1970) refer to pogroms and the difficulties of Jewish life, if only indirectly relating themselves to World War II.

⁸⁸ This assimilation is at least partly against his will, as the marriage is a shotgun wedding.

Parade, which also locates a Jewish female within its story, is still mostly a tragic variation on the late 1920s shows *Whoopee!* and *Girl Crazy*, about a city-dwelling Jewish male out of his element in a wilder, rougher environment. The men in the two earlier shows manage to survive by knowledgeably manipulating their theatrical environment. As discussed earlier, the two 1920s characters survive by acute self-awareness of their own theatricality, assuming (and assimilating) a wide variety of personalities to harmonize with those around them. Leo is able to do this only too late, and does so completely, rather than theatrically, and therefore, he cannot survive; Conley, on the other hand, shows just such self-awareness. By and large, the musical stage Jew has often continued along these lines since the 1920s. Characters such as Tevye in *Fiddler on the Roof*, Fagin in *Oliver!*, Fanny Brice, Dolly Levi and even Papa Rothschild all join these men in their self-aware role-playing. It is precisely because these characters hold the audience's ear that they have "the upper hand onstage" (Most "Izzy" 313).

There is a long theatrical tradition surrounding characters who step out of their prescribed social roles; this almost always results in their death. It is perhaps significant that a non-comic Jewish male such as Mordecai, Herr Schultz or Leo will die.⁸⁹ These three men do not have the self-conscious performativity of a character like Ali Hakim (or even Jim Conley) and, as a result, have nowhere to turn to confuse their pursuers and opponents and can therefore be caught easily. Ali is less "fiercely individualist" than Jud (Most *Oklahoma!* 83); he is revealed as more assimilable by his very adaptability to any situation.

⁸⁹ There is some confusion about Mordecai's ending, but it is certainly possible to read his insensible condition as death. Herr Schultz is not dead at the end of *Cabaret*, but the audience is fully aware of the end of those Jews who stayed in Germany.

As this chapter is written, the newest smash hit on Broadway is Mel Brooks' stage adaptation of *The Producers* (2001). Brooks deliberately deals in stereotypes in order to overturn them—Jews, queers, and women all come in for their fair share. As John Lahr says, “Brooks likes nothing more than to push a stereotype to such an extreme that the lie behind it becomes hilarious” (86), citing as an example the moment when an African-American accountant sings in a deep bass voice, “Oh I debits all de mornin’ / An’ I credits all de eb’nin’ / Until dem ledgers be rightttt” (86). Robert Brustein agrees: “Nobody can touch Brooks when it comes to letting the air out of evil icons (he did the same to Torquemada and the Inquisition), generally by exposing how much they have in common with showbiz” (Brustein 3).

The hero of *The Producers*, Max Bialystock, is a venal Jewish producer who will do anything for money. He also has the same deliberate performativity to elude his pursuers (up to a point); after being caught by the authorities, he is given what is more or less a slap on the wrist and he simply begins again. Brustein says that “Mel Brooks demonstrates that comedy is not only capable of exposing stupidity and pretension. At times, it can also exorcise and nullify evil” (4). In this way, the musical stage Jew manages to survive despite negative stereotypes—and sometimes by traveling through them.

“We are a family, like a giant tree
Branching out towards the sky.
We are a family; there is so much more
Than just you and I.”
“We Are A Family” *Dreamgirls* (Tom Eyer)

CHAPTER IV

“WE ARE A FAMILY”

“Family” is more difficult to define than to discuss, and each group that discusses it is convinced that it has the correct reading. As this chapter concerns itself with alternative family structures, some attention must be paid to what is commonly believed to be a traditional family structure. While these traditions come from a variety of customs (including all aspects of blood ties and contractual beliefs),

our religious and cultural traditions . . . have cast the mother-child dyad, protected and dominated by a patriarch, as the most significant as well as the idealized form of family. This was then bolstered by aristocratic and later middle-class ideas about breeding, . . . with special attention to lines of descent. (Davidoff et. al. 96)

This chapter will examine the formation of musical stage families that are formed not with regard for these conventional aspects of family, but which create their own bases of relationship and support.

I begin with the premise that a family is a specific type of community; in fact, innumerable theorists describe family as a community in microcosm. A family is formed (perhaps) more intentionally than most communities, and certainly with the objective of a more closely-knit formation than is found in many communities. Eventually, many—if

not most—of the hegemonic designators of both these terms will conclude that family ends by being considered *the* paradigmatic social community.⁹⁰

This leads to the definition of “family.” Sociologists cannot agree on what has historically constituted such a community. Some, including Ferdinand Mount, believe that the so-called “nuclear” family has been in place for generations; others, such as Tamara Hareven, suggest “studies now show that nuclear households, rather than being isolated, were embedded in kinship ties outside their confines,” both during the contemporary era and reaching back to the Middle Ages, the period Mount deems nuclear in make-up.

Janet Dolgin, in *Defining the Family* (1997), states that family has been the subject of as much unstated assumption as any of the other topics explored in these pages:

Among the axioms central to Western culture has been the conviction that the family is rooted in the very nature of things. . . . [C]onsensus has existed that family was as natural as the turning of the sun, as immutable, subject as strictly to intrinsic law, as indispensable to the conduct of life. Upon that consensus the stability of much of Western society was founded. (Dolgin 1)

The conflict arises, believes Rosabeth Moss Kanter, because there are two conventional characterizations of family, one of which concerns itself principally with biological relationships and the other with the characteristics of those relationships. Kanter sees conventional family structures moving from the first characteristic toward the second (Kanter). The disagreement has come about, believes Tamara Hareven, because there has been an historical

⁹⁰ Utilizing community as an initial definition actually multiplies the difficulties inherent within explanation. According to Richard Barr, one sociological study alone counted “over ninety definitions” of community (1).

concentration on the household [which] has led to a definition restricting the ‘family’ to the household, thereby overlooking the role of extended kin members who did not reside with the nuclear family. . . . This emphasis, however, has reinforced the confusion of household with family and, except for preindustrial society, has confined most analyses of family structure to the household unit. (32)

This gives us a place to begin. If tradition has looked to biological relationships as constituting a family, subversion will examine other characteristics of family relationships. Eleanor Macklin defines as nontraditional “all living patterns other than legal, lifelong, sexually exclusive marriage between one man and one woman, with children, where the male is the primary provider and ultimate authority” (Macklin xii). If a nontraditional family is more than a simple household, we can examine the groups in the following musicals that do not necessarily live under one roof, or who are not related through biology.

John Scanzoni offers a route into what that might mean. In his book *Designing Families: The Search for Self and Community in the Information Age*, he suggests that “family” might be replaced by “primary group,” or a group of several families.

A primary group is marked by we-feelings, or a sense of we-ness. We-ness implies belonging to something that is bigger and more important than oneself [sic]. A person who belongs to a primary group is convinced that he or she matters to others in the group, that they genuinely care about what happens to him or her. By the same token, the other members of that group matter to that individual. . . . The flip side of belonging to a we-group is that it helps to reinforce the individual’s sense of me-ness, or identity—‘Who I am.’ (86)

Andrea Most discusses this formation of musical community in her article “We Know We Belong to the Land.” The story of *Oklahoma!* may be about individual choice,

but the driving energy of the musical numbers contradicts the overt message of the plot—instead of privileging individual choices and dilemmas, this energy celebrates a utopian melding of differences into a unified loving American community. Access to this community is

determined not by character but by function: anyone willing and able to perform the songs and dances can join. (Most *Oklahoma!* 79).

In musicals such as *Oklahoma!*, which are about the formation of larger communities than “family,” there tend to be a great many more communal songs than in the works of the type discussed in this chapter. Most points out that only three songs in *Oklahoma!* are solos, “and two of them—‘Oh, What a Beautiful Morning’ and ‘I Cain’t Say No’—include an onstage audience (Most *Oklahoma!* 79). Conversely, the musicals examined in this chapter contain a very large number of solo numbers, with the “family” community rarely singing together as a group. This would accentuate their status as “alternative;” more traditional onstage musical families—the von Trapps (*The Sound of Music*), Tevye’s family (*Fiddler on the Roof*), and the group formed in *Annie*—frequently sing together as family groups.

Because changes in family structure have become so prevalent, Tamara Hareven suggests that most people today have “an increasing appreciation of the changing and diverse nature of ‘the family’ rendered fluid by shifts in internal age and gender configurations across regions and over time” (3). William Smith sums up: “Thus, the family is becoming a place where biological ties are less likely to be the main determinants of intimacy and who constitutes a family member. The postbiological family, as a new family norm, allows for greater diversity in composition, form, and meaning” (Smith *Communes* 13).

Theatre is an ideal setting for exploration(s) of any type of community. Richard Barr suggests that “modern theatre, and indeed, theatre itself, is *always* about community because performance always involves communal dynamics” (Barr 3). It is this very involvement that allows theatre to form communities—families, if you will—based upon

Victor Turner's theory of "*communitas*," which he defines as "a bond uniting people over and above any formal social bonds" (Turner 45). This bond is "spontaneous, immediate, concrete" and opposed to "all that which holds people apart [and] defines their differences. *Communitas*, in short, results in total, unmediated relationships between person and person" (274).

Theatre is certainly one method of regaining this almost vanished sensation of non-intercessory, interpersonal relationship. Musical theatre adds even further to the mixture when one realizes that there is an extraordinarily long tradition within the genre of singers directly addressing the audience (or each other) through their songs. This sense of immediacy is further reflected within the relationships between the onstage characters within most musicals. Singing (or dancing) together is perhaps the most instantaneous method—and certainly one of the easiest ways—method of creating such a community onstage, implicitly or explicitly. As discussed in Chapter 2, Ali Hakim is allowed to become part of a community by singing with the rest of that group in *Oklahoma!*. Such a group is created immediately when its members begin singing or dancing together.

In this chapter, I will examine three musicals: *Babes In Arms* (1937), *My Fair Lady* (1956), and William Finn's trilogy of one-act musicals which have recently been reorganized and are best known (in part) as *Falsettos* (1992). While no one will deny that the style of nontraditional family has changed within the following musicals, it is obvious that the accepted units of structure have been subverted for quite a while on the American musical stage.

The American Family Before the Twentieth Century

During the American Revolution, home and work were the same site for many families, as the newly-formed country was principally agrarian in nature. It was only during the Industrial Revolution, which took place in America largely after the Civil War, that the United States became an industrial nation; the economic boom in this country was from 1860 to 1890. It was during this time that families began to differentiate between home and work. This model “drew on colonial ideas about proper family life but . . . adapted them to meet a new set of needs. The paradigm featured strongly differentiated gender roles, a vision of domestic security and harmony, and an emphasis on childrearing” (Brady 83). This happened largely because this new model “emphasized a sharp delineation of differences, especially in the mutually exclusive spheres of work and home within which they were expected to operate” (Brady 92). So women had one set of expectations and men another; children had one set and the parents another. There was little intersection between the various roles.

Economics played a large role in family life even then. Not just because a family had to live, and eat, but because it seemed founded—at least in part—on economic principles. Friederich Engels noted that the problems with marriage were two-pronged, and sprang from “its origin in property relations.” According to Engels, the problems were “in the first place, supremacy of the man, and secondly, the indissolubility of marriage.” The first he considered to be a straightforward result of his male “economic supremacy, and with the abolition of the latter will disappear of itself.” The fact that marriages could not be dissolved was an outgrowth of the economic circumstances at the time marriage had begun, and was held over because the populace had only just begun to

comprehend that it was based in matters of economics (Engels 145).

By the turn of the century, those rigid structures surrounding families had begun to loosen and change, in large part because of the relatively new differentiation between work and home life. Government might still put in place harsh laws against such family concerns as contraception, but society might make its own way in silent disagreement. Dolgin points out that, despite the presence of contraceptive laws, family size continued to decline during the nineteenth century (33-34). By 1900, paternal power had weakened, though not in the least disappeared; marriage had become mostly a matter of personal preference, and the family, “no longer unaided in providing for the educational and welfare needs of its members, was more often expected to ‘provide romance, sexual fulfillment, and emotional satisfaction’” (Dolgin 26).

The American Family after 1900: Setting the Stage for *Babes In Arms*

Despite somewhat contradictory claims by different experts, it seems that family structure remained stuck in its hierarchical state while still seeking how it fit into society (Dolgin 28). “By the first decades of the twentieth century, experts were redefining proper family behavior and governmental involvement in the private sphere was reaching an all-time high,” and by this point, debates about the family took as settled the participation of external groups in the business of the family (Brady 103). It was believed that these outside parties were needed because the 1920s saw an enormous challenge to traditional norms. The youthful populace “no longer listened to, obeyed, or followed the examples of their elders” (Brady 106).

It was during this era, the teens and 1920s, that the family model with the mother

as the primary caregiver to the children began to supplant the completely patriarchal model (Coontz *Were* 9), but patriarchy kept its command of the situation. A 1911 study entitled “The Law and the American Child” stated confidently that

The parents have the natural right to the control and custody of the child. The common-law rule was that the father’s right to custody of a legitimate child was superior to that of the mother. But the common-law rule has been modified in most, if not all, states (Carrigan 171).

Carrigan then lists only twenty states where a mother may be legally named a child’s guardian at this time.

Much of this changed with the coming of the Great Depression. Individuals were not able to resolve the conflicts between the demands of family and the new psychological demands placed upon them (Brady 108). Sociologists during this time “were convinced that the family was in the midst of a painful but necessary transition, and that it would adapt only by emphasizing its affectional and companionship functions” (Wandersee 127). Roles changed in several different ways. Women went to work or “surreptitiously went to welfare agencies to receive food staples for the family, while their husbands pretended to be self-sufficient” (Hareven 97, see also Wandersee 129). Children were expected to acclimatize to the economic and practical requirements of the family, taking on adult responsibilities at an early age. Traditional male roles were reinforced, but with young men required to take financial responsibilities on themselves outside of the home, these responsibilities simply reinforced the duty toward the family (Wandersee 35).

Winifred Wandersee discusses various theories of the time, citing one which believed that “the vulnerability of the family to the Depression varied inversely with the family’s integration and adaptation.” “Integration” meant a family unanimity based upon

“kindly feelings, common activities, mutuality of interests, and family ambition and pride.” But this theory stressed flexibility, as well. “Accordingly, if the wife became the chief breadwinner, an adaptable family would be able to rationalize the change through new concepts of member roles.” Rigidity, which would not allow the family to adapt, was produced by “a materialistic philosophy of life, traditionalism in family mores, and irresponsibility of one of both parents” (132).⁹¹ It was said that the Depression performed its worst deeds by causing many of young people to “lose that vision of their own potential that is essential to achievement beyond the ordinary routine of work and family” (Wandersee 135). This most certainly is not the case with the youthful characters examined in *Babes in Arms*.

“Youth Will Arrive:” *Babes in Arms* and the Extended Family

Babes in Arms, the original “Hey kids! Let’s put on a musical” musical, proved to be so popular that it gave birth to scores of imitators. The plot is simple: the majority of the adults of Seaport, Long Island depart on a tour to “bring back vaudeville.” This leaves their teenaged children behind, mostly unsupervised. Rather than stay at the local Work Farm, the kids decide to show their parents they are both self-supporting and talented in their own rights, so they stage an original musical revue. Before they can open the shows, however, the producer (a rich teen from the community) pulls his backing and they are forced to go to the Work Farm. During the historic overseas flight of a Rene Flambeau, a French aviator, the Sheriff brings the group back to town to see the plane pass overhead. When Flambeau makes an emergency landing nearby,

⁹¹ Notably, parental irresponsibility will occasion adaptation with all three families examined in this chapter.

Valenting, the author and director of the revue, takes the unconscious aviator's place, using his radio interviews to publicize the kids' show. Flambeau is angry until he see the acts, and all is forgiven.

The production came about one day when Rodgers and Hart were walking through Central Park. Rodgers remembered that "we noticed a bunch of children in a playground who were making up their own games and rules. We began talking about kids and what might happen if they were suddenly given adult responsibilities, such as finding ways to earn a living" (Rodgers *Stages* 180). Even from its inception, *Babes in Arms* took as its format a group of people who "were making up their own . . . rules." It is no wonder that these characters would find their own alternative family structures within the group that is formed when they come together as a community without adults.

The musical was something of an experiment: it was Rodgers and Hart's first attempt at writing their own book, and the actors were all within the age ranges of the extremely young characters they represented.⁹² The emphasis was on the youth of the cast from the beginning; nearly everyone in the musical was a teenager, and "the show's playbill took the form of a birth announcement from the producer, Dwight Deer Wiman" (D. Hart 101). This highlighting of the work's youthfulness operates to emphasize the familial foundation of *Babes in Arms*: birth announcements are sent by people to announce the reformulation of families.

Despite rave reviews, a now-classic score, and a situation so functional that it became a cliché, *Babes in Arms* almost did not succeed. As *Variety* pointed out in a rather prescient-sounding assessment of the work's chances, "No nudity, no show girls,

⁹² Rare then, rare now.

no plush or gold play may mean no sale” (qtd. in Nolan 218).⁹³ The producers reduced ticket prices, to no effect. On July 17, a miracle of sorts befell the beleaguered musical: all the other musicals on Broadway closed and *Babes in Arms* became literally the only musical running for three weeks (Nolan 218). After crowds had a chance to actually see the piece, word of mouth kept it running for 289 performances.

Babes in Arms begins with the dissolution of the nuclear family. Not only do the teenagers’ parents all leave them (mostly) alone and unsupervised, but the adults give them a concrete assessment of their worthlessness, as well. The first scene begins with their leave-taking.⁹⁴ The audience will see them again only at the work’s end, as the parents watch and cheer their children’s final show. They are not even given lines with which to wrap up the evening, a sure sign they are not a major portion of either it or their children’s lives.

The lone parents we see are those of Val and Marshall, the musical’s male lead and his sidekick, respectively; these parents obviously stand in for the rest of the adults, since only the Sheriff is left in town. It is apparent that the parents do not know their children well. The LaMars know nothing of Val’s onstage capabilities, or perhaps, since they do not respond to him at all, even know that he has theatrical aspirations. It is only in support of their more rigid and traditional views of family that, when Valentine was a small child, his parents “would lead me on for the third bow to show that they were married” (I-1-11). The only lines directed to their children are “Nothing doing,” as Dan

⁹³ This same line would echo in Michael Todd’s famous summation of *Oklahoma!*’s chances: “No girls, no gags, no chance.”

⁹⁴ During the Overture, “we see portions of the song-and-dance vaudeville acts of Emma and Nat Blackstone and Maizie and Dan Lamar” (1-1-1). I am confident that this stage direction is an addition by John Guare, who “adapted” this “original” 1937 version of the libretto, in order to give those actors playing the parents more stage time. It is only with the last few decades that audiences have seen onstage action during overtures.

responds to Val's pleas to come along. Maizie chimes in with "Oh, Valentine, we can't. Goodbye, my boy. See you at Christmas!" (I-1-2).

This instant dismissal works, in an almost Shakespearian manner, to get the plot started quickly. It is also true that these children are far from being too young to take care of themselves (as is obviously intended). However, these parents do not seem to care much for their children. Not only do they not take them with them, but they lie to them, leaving them "on their own" only until the Sheriff tells them they must go to the Work Farm. It is here their inappropriate behavior shines through most significantly: they have left to pursue their own careers and have abandoned their children to be wards of the state. They match perfectly Wandersee's profile of a family which will not adapt (and might therefore not survive) as materialistic, traditional, and irresponsible; the kids will have to be the responsible ones, in fact.

The parents appear only once more, during the finale. Toward the end of the "finale ultimo" reprise of "Babes in Arms," "the music continues as Maizie and Dan LaMar, and Emma and Nat Blackstone, who have been watching proudly from a distance, are reunited with their kids" (II-4-65). This, too, could be an addition by Guare, but if it is, it is immaterial to the matter at hand. If the parents do not reappear at all, the town has been given over to the new family formed by the teenagers. If *Babes in Arms* originally played as read in this libretto, this is not a particularly expert return of the traditional hegemony. These characters do not speak, and simply congratulate the teens on their success. In fact, given what we have heard of their tour, the children are more successful than the parents, presumably earning enough money to remain—as a familial community—even before their parents return.

The first new family grouping seen is that of Val and his best friend, Marshall. Their first interaction, as will be the case in the other musicals examined in this chapter, is economic: they discover that they have \$1.65 between them, and their parents have left for five months.

Marshall: They said we'd be taken care of.

Val: Listen, Marsh, run over to your house and get your things packed.

You're moving in with me. Two can live cheaper than one.

Marshall: Fine, but we may have to give up the yacht.

Val: Very funny.

Marshall: (In doorway.) We'll be the happiest couple in Seaport. (I-1-3).

This movement toward any queering of their relationship is presented as a joke, and Rodgers and Hart take care of any implications by immediately producing Billie, Val's love interest, upon the last line above. But there is already a growing dependence upon each other, and a slight mistrust of their biological parents ("they said").

Billie and Val vacillate between being teenagers in love and replacement parents for the group at large. Billie belongs in this group of orphans—her own lack of family is quickly established, as she tells Val upon her entrance that "home is anywhere I get a job" (I-1-4). Note that once again economics is a central theme of family and home. Her lack of family is emphasized even further by her major song, "The Lady is a Tramp," wherein "tramp" is taken at its older meaning of "wanderer." It is this concentration on Billie's wanderings that makes her decision to stay with the group so powerful.

As she hitchhikes back to New York from a failed attempt at a film career in Los Angeles, it is Val who insists that she stay over for food and rest.

Billie: Whose bed?

Val: M-m-mine.

Billie: And where will you sleep?

Val: On the sleeping porch. Maybe you won't like it. It connects with my bedroom and there's no lock on the door.

Billie: I don't mind.

Val: You don't?

Billie: No, I've seen those moving pictures. Nothing ever happens.

Val: It's a good thing my folks aren't here. (I-1-5)

In fact, if Val's parents *were* there, none of this would happen. Had his family of origin stayed or taken care of him, there would be less (perhaps no) need of his forming an alternative one. The conversation continues.

Billie: I'll bet you've read an awful lot about love.

Val: Oh, yes. But you know, *you sometimes meet somebody who sort of makes you forget everything—all that you've read and . . .*

Billie: And you don't know what to think?

Val: I don't care what I think. (I-1-6) (emphasis mine)

In other words, relationships are beginning to be based on individual connections, rather than those made because of tradition. The family is beginning to redefine itself as a unit of choice, rather than of biology or predetermined choices others have made. Billie and Val realize that established and conventional ideas, including those of family, can be overturned rather quickly. The idea is elaborated as they sing "Where or When," which also contains the idea of subverting traditional relationships. "Things you do come back to you as though they knew the way" (I-1-7). Sometimes actions feel so right that even though they may be nontraditional, they are correct for those who trade in them.⁹⁵

The two biological family structures in the musical make their first appearance in the second scene. Both are between pairs of brothers. The first pair is Lee and Beauregarde Calhoun, who come from a far richer family of origin than do the others. It

⁹⁵ The line quoted above and, indeed, the song itself, comes from an earlier onstage discussion of Nietzsche; in fact, "Where Or When" discusses eternal recurrence.

is Lee who will act as producer, bankrolling Val's revue with \$42.76. Lee is also the villain of the piece; he not only attempts to steal Billie from Val, but rescinds his bankroll when the other brothers within the musical are allowed to be in Val's show. He is, in fact, the only person within this community of theatrical teenagers who has any prejudice against the African-American DeQuincy brothers.⁹⁶ The Calhouns are two "southern" brothers, so-called because the most southern of their ancestors was a grandfather born in South Dakota; this knowledge is Lee's secret shame. It also means that there is no reality to this family's self-construction. This will allow the clear-sighted construction of the teenage family to be seen by the audience as quite genuine; this larger family is based on a practical look at economics (something the Calhouns do not have to worry about), as well as realistic notions of survival and support.

Lee's prejudice against the DeQuincy brothers is not only an important plot point—if they go onstage he will retract his financing—but gives the idea of a family of choice more impetus. The inclusion of the two African-American (also without parents) within the family of choice raises the stakes for the familial formation. If the two go on, the cast will lose its livelihood, yet it is important to them all to keep the brothers in the show.⁹⁷ The dispute also raises issues of exclusion from family and community due to race and ethnicity (see Chapter 3).

The first official gathering of the new, enlarged family is during the beginning of the second scene and, as usual, finances must be given their due for the new community to succeed. Val begins by telling the group "We must put ourselves on a sound economic

⁹⁶ The DeQuincy brothers were originally played by the Nicholas brothers in their first professional engagement.

basis” (I-2-14). Money continues to play a role as the new family forms itself. Val realizes at one point that his parents are not the responsible adults that he has become. He receives a letter from them which tells him “We’re doing great business. The show is losing so little that the management is very encouraged.” He disgustedly responds with “My parents—what dopes! They’re like children, still hoping the big break will fall out of the sky.” Shortly afterward, he says “Thank God one of us is a grown-up” (II-1-43). Within this work non-traditional families recreate traditional family roles, to a certain extent: Val and Billie will act as surrogate parents to the rest of the gang through much of the musical.

Money continues its role as the Sheriff (apparently the only adult left in town) endeavors to take the teenagers to the Work Farm. Billie’s plea to stop him consists of a mixture of patriotism and traditional family structure.

Sheriff, don’t you love your country? All I know about Oscar W. Hemmingway [for whom the American Legion Hall is named] and a lot of soldiers like him—they fought a war to make the world safe for their children. What would Oscar W. Hemmingway say if you sent their children to the Work Farm?” (I-2-22).

This has no effect on the Sheriff; what *does* sway him is a combination of economic pressure and embarrassment at being caught in his own traditional family structure. He allows them one week to “prove to you we can take care of ourselves. . . . We’ll make a fortune!” (I-2-22—I-2-23). Meanwhile, Dolores, his daughter, “rises [and] puts her arms around Sheriff,” saying, “Now, Daddy!” His immediate response is “Stop that!,” followed by instantly by “OH, all right, but remember, it’s just one week” (I-2-23). This decision is enhanced musically by a reprise of “Babes in Arms,” reminding both the

⁹⁷ Their song, “All Dark People,” has been unreleased by the Rodgers and Hammerstein Library for many years. The circumstances surrounding it are certainly anti-prejudice, but the lyric has major difficulties.

Sheriff and the audience of the cast's new family structure.

One character is highly interesting within this discussion. Baby Rose is a faded child star whose name implies both family and her place within it. There are several challenges to a conventional interpretation of this, however. She is sixteen years old; the implication is that the audience (via the teenagers onstage), when told they have acquired her talents for the show, expect someone more like the young Shirley Temple, instead getting a near adult. And while no mention of this is made within the confines of the libretto, the *New York Times* review mentions that she is overweight, as well.⁹⁸ The greatest joke of all, however, is that she plays a mother in Val's revue, first seen "rocking little Beauregarde to sleep" and telling him the story of "Johnny One-Note" (I-6-38).

Baby Rose completely inverts the audience's (and characters') ideas formed by her nomenclature. She is no physical baby, but is old enough to have her own romantic relationships. The fact that a female character was overweight and that no other characters mention it (with the exception of Lee Calhoun) was revolutionary enough. Add to it the fact that Baby Rose ends the musical in the arms of the romantic aviator and the character strongly challenges conventional notions of beauty. The detail of Rose portraying Beau's mother might be seen as merely ironic, but in actuality, the casting of Baby Rose as a mother completely incorporates both sides of the parent/child equation into one body, rendering the binary meaningless.

Both her songs also subvert expectations. The first, "Way Out West" begins with "Western"-sounding accompaniment, but the title phrase in its entirety is "Way out west

The entire lyric is printed in the appendix.

⁹⁸ In yet another positive detail of this musical, this does not stop her from being sexy, nor does it figure into her self-image or interfere with how those around her behave toward her. The single exception to this is Lee, who has already established himself as the heavy.

on West End Avenue. / Yip-pee-aye-ay!” (I-4-33). “Johnny One-Note” is a song only a mature belter can sing correctly, leaning as heavily as it does on a “money note,” or the note that a singer can “sell.” By the end of the show, Baby Rose pairs herself off with Rene Flambeau, the aviator. He is not necessarily much older than she, and cannot be too much (since Val is able to impersonate him), but it is interesting to note “Baby Rose” pairs off with an adult intruder to the family.

The most direct commentary on traditional family life within the confines of *Babes In Arms* is the duet “All At Once,” sung by Val and Billie.

All at once
Baby starts in toddling,
And all at once
Baby needs no coddling.
Then soon
Knows all the names
Of toys and games,
Discovers duty,
Beauty. . . .
All at once
Baby’s going to love me! (II-1-43).

This song most obviously reflects the quick growing up these characters have done, with the amusing twist that it is they who are singing of their advanced ages: “Now that we’ve met we forget our old age. / We’re kids again in the nursery stage” (II-1-44). But the song’s “baby” has obviously begun to carve out a different life from that s/he once knew; this song not only works within the lives of the duo singing it, but echoes the audience’s ideas concerning Baby Rose.

Two more songs should be mentioned as particularly subversive.⁹⁹ “Johnny One-

⁹⁹ When discussing songs, mention should be made of the “anti-love song,” at which Hart was an expert. Such a song tells the audience that the singers are in love but do not overtly state it. In this work, “I Wish I Were In Love Again” contains the lines “The sleepless nights, / The daily fights, / The quick toboggan when you reach the heights, / I miss the kisses and I miss the bites, / I wish I were in love again!” (I-2-18).

Note” tells the story of a young man who disrupts an opera company, a theatrical community much like the one we have watched being formed. He disorders the troupe by enlarging his talent to the point where the greater communal good is ruined. Despite this, the singer has great respect for Johnny’s talent—the singing of one note so loudly that he literally disrupts traffic. This song reflects both the difficulties and the end result that the unconventional family of *Babes in Arms* contains. Like the opera company which employs Johnny, this group must overcome difficulties posed by the individual personalities within it. However, like the singer, these individual contributions are important on their own. Val embodies this idea by calming the original meeting with his comments that “It may appear on the surface that all our ideas are a little different, but when we put them all together I think we ought to get something interesting” (I-2-16). This pushing toward *communitas*, toward a family, is strongly within the theme of *Babes in Arms*. These characters may still replicate a traditional family structure, but they allow each other freedom and fluidity to disengage from those roles occasionally. It will be left to later musicals to formulate family made of still less time-honored gender and age roles.

The title song is supremely important within this context. Rodgers tended to write melodies based upon scales, but nowhere is this more obvious or less disguised than in “Babes in Arms.” The first time we hear this song, it is a perfect example of *communitas*, the type of familial community that is so much more easily available on the musical stage. As Val, Marshall, and Billie begin the song, “the gang begins swarming on, adding their voices to the song phrase by phrase” (I-2-12). This immediacy would not be possible in a non-musical, yet it is perfectly acceptable within this tradition to have

In other words, an anti-love song disrupts the normative narrative expectation of a traditional love song. It derives most of its humor from such a disruption, but yet again, relationships are non-normative within this

people entering only to join in a song, as this group does, to great communal effect. The fact that the melody simply rises ever higher only emphasizes their strength and intensity.

Women and Family in the Mid-Twentieth Century

As soon as the family is addressed, issues of gender come into the foreground. The family is, after all, still the primary form of social unit, whatever we think of its ideologies, its laws and its practices. Since the family is also at the centre of the ways women's complex sense of identity and life choices are constructed . . . the representation (or not) of the family in drama becomes something of an index of the way in which personal and political interact—or do not. (Wandor 36).

American women's roles changed drastically during and after World War II.

During the war, women served in the military and many more went to work in defense plants and offices as the men of the family served in other areas of the war effort.

“Women have ironically benefited in many ways” from war, “receiving extra state support, job, education, nursery and welfare opportunities denied them in the preceding peacetime” (Wandor 27). After the war ended and the male population returned to civilian life, women were expected to quit their jobs and go back to being housewives and mothers. “The informing agenda involved reuniting families, and re-establishing the family unit as the cornerstone of personal life and social construction” (Wandor 27).

Yet there were significant changes. “Married women, given more crucial roles in the national economy and in the physical functioning of their own families, began to reevaluate domesticity and lives centered on home and husband” (Sealand 161).

There was a rapid expansion of higher education among both men and women. There was also an increase in the number of working wives and mothers as the baby boom progressed; eventually this boom would generate the two wage-earning parent as the

most common of family structures (Sealand 171), paving the way for other, non-nuclear kinds of families, such as divorced or single-parent households. The rising number of homes with working women reflected a rise in the middle class (Sealand 159), a rise which would legitimate the two-income family.

While Shaw's *Pygmalion* was written in 1916, another era which saw the rise in women's visibility outside the home, *My Fair Lady* strongly reflected these trends. Eliza is not content with things as they are, yet does not only dream of a better life, but makes it happen, seeing to her own education and rise in station.

"The Middleaged Bully and the Girl of Eighteen"

My Fair Lady premiered March 15, 1956. Few theatre pieces have been as widely anticipated, and few have achieved as much success, both critical and popular. It made a musical star out of Rex Harrison, began the stardom of Julie Andrews, ran for 2,717 performances, and has remained popular to this day. As one of the most popular musicals in the world, it hardly seems necessary to recount its story, but a brief synopsis may be worthwhile. Based on George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*, *My Fair Lady* recounts the story of Eliza, a Cockney flower girl who meets a phonetics teacher, Henry Higgins. Higgins, responding to a challenge from his friend, Colonel Hugh Pickering, declares he can pass Eliza off as a duchess at the Embassy Ball. During the course of the evening, Eliza learns to speak correctly and by the work's end, has discovered a strength and independence within herself.

Whether there is a passionate love between Eliza and Higgins has been debated since Shaw's work first appeared. *Pygmalion: A Romance In Five Acts* premiered in

1914, to instant acclaim. Despite the title, despite the subtitle, and despite the hopes of actors, actresses, and audiences, Shaw resolutely resisted a romantic ending between Higgins and Eliza. The debate began as early as the play's first production. Shaw's play ends when Eliza walks out of Mrs. Higgins' house, telling Higgins "I shall not be seeing you again" and that he should buy his gloves himself.¹⁰⁰ After Shaw stopped attending performances, Herbert Beerbohm Tree, the first Higgins, altered this ending to consist of his moving to the balcony after Eliza's departure to throw flowers and kisses after her. Shaw was furious (Dukore 102). The play's title, of course, comes from the Greek myth of the sculptor, Pygmalion, who created a statue so beautiful he fell in love with it. The subtitle seems more problematic, particularly since the author himself termed his play a "romance." When questioned about this, he replied "I call it a romance because it is the story of a poor girl who meets a gentleman at a church door, and is transformed by him, like Cinderella, into a beautiful lady. That is what I call a romance. It is also what everybody else calls a romance, so we are all agreed for once" (qtd. in Henderson 616). In the epilogue to the play, Shaw observes that "Romance keeps its stock of 'happy endings' to misfit all stories" (Shaw 281) and further declares that the story is "called a romance because the transfiguration it records seems exceedingly improbable," but

is common enough. Such transfigurations have been achieved by hundreds of resolutely ambitious young women since Nell Gwynne set them an example by playing queens and fascinating kings Nevertheless, people in all directions have assumed, for no other reason than that she [Eliza] became the heroine of a romance, that she must have married the hero of it. This is unbearable, not only because her little drama, if acted upon such a thoughtless assumption, must be spoiled, but because the true sequel is patent to anyone with a sense of human nature. (Shaw 281-282)

¹⁰⁰ All quotations and references to *Pygmalion* are from Shaw's *Collected Works*. See the "Works Cited." It is widely asserted that Mrs. Campbell returned to the stage opening night to ask "what size" gloves Higgins wanted (Lerner "Street" 36).

Whether or not “we are all agreed,” Shaw remained unwavering in his determination that “the middleaged (sic) bully and the girl of eighteen” were never to be considered as lovers (qtd. in Dukore 102). It is also crystal clear that Shaw intended the work to be a polemic on the class system, particularly as personified by differences in language and culture. According to Shavian scholar Louis Crompton, the opening moments of *Pygmalion* are “chosen to show class antagonisms . . . at their sharpest” (142).

The disputes over whether or not the two protagonists fall in romantic love continue to this day. Critics continue to find romantic meanings in songs that do not necessarily contain them and productions find ways to endorse such a reading.¹⁰¹ It is my contention that Higgins and Eliza—and to a lesser extent, Pickering—fall into familial love, wherein they love each other and wish to live together, but not as a traditional romantic couple (or threesome).

Many musicals over the years have been about families,¹⁰² but have not featured heteronormative, romantic relationships. Countless productions of *Mame* are terrible precisely because the relationship between Mame and her nephew, Patrick is not clearly defined. The John Huston film version of *Annie* brought back what the stage version realized the story could not sustain: a love story between Warbucks and Grace, his secretary. The main plot is about the love between Warbucks and his ward. The list is long; audiences are simply so used to seeing a romantic love story wrap things up that they forget that there are other types of love, many of which appear on the musical stage.

¹⁰¹ During the late 1980s, Houston Grand Opera’s production of *My Fair Lady* ended with Higgins running upstage, picking Eliza up, and swinging her around in his joy at her return. The ending stage directions—discussed later—state that Higgins *cannot* do this kind of thing.

¹⁰² *Lady Be Good* (1924), *The Sound of Music* (1959), *Bye, Bye, Birdie* (1960), and *Mamma Mia* (2001) all feature onstage families in some manner.

Shaw himself said that even his own ending of Eliza making a match with Freddie “would hardly need telling if our imaginations were not so enfeebled by their lazy dependence on the ready-mades and reach-me-downs of the ragshop in which Romance keeps its stock of ‘happy endings’” (Shaw 281).

Conversely, of course, there is Lerner’s famous note to the published version of *My Fair Lady*: he omitted Shaw’s epilogue “because in it Shaw explains how Eliza ends not with Higgins but with Freddy and—Shaw and Heaven forgive me!—I am not certain he is right” (7). Set against this was Lerner’s own statement that

Pygmalion, although Shaw called it a romance, is a non-love story. . . . Even though all through the last act Higgins rants and raves like a man in love, the play ends with Eliza leaving and Higgins supposedly delighted with himself because he has created a human being capable of standing on her own two feet. . . . [N]o matter how the play ended, until the last scene it was most definitely a non-love story and how, may I ask, does one write a non-love song?” (Lerner “Street” 36-37)

It *is* a love story—just not a traditionally romantic love story.

Shaw’s original play positions the creation of a new family by placing it squarely against one that barely exists (Eliza’s family of origin) and one that is fully in place but frozen (that of Freddie Eynsford-Hill, his mother, and his sister Clara, a character edited out of the musical version). Clara’s disappearance, alongside the decline of Mrs. Eynsford-Hill’s stage time, are significant losses for purposes of comparison; the vitality and strength of the bonds forged by the lead characters seem even stronger by contrast with the Eynsford-Hills. However, Alfred P. Doolittle is given more stage time in the musical than in the original work, and with the extraordinarily fractured structure of this family, the loss of the Eynsford-Hills is not as great as it might otherwise have been.

In *My Fair Lady*, Doolittle is first seen trying to cadge drinking money from his

daughter; economics appears within the family structure yet again. His explanation of his non-involvement in her life is indicative of his entire outlook:

Hyde Park to walk through on a fine spring night, the whole ruddy city of London to roam about in sellin' her flowers. I give her all that, and then I disappears and leaves her on her own to enjoy it. Now if that ain't worth half a crown now and again, I'll take off my belt and give her what for.
(27)¹⁰³

Like the familial relationships in *Babes in Arms*, family to the Doolittles involves a certain amount of economic exertion. He “borrows” money from her when they first meet, and for all intents and purposes, he sells her to Higgins for five pounds. When Eliza leaves Wimpole Street, Doolittle assumes immediately that the difficulty is monetary in nature: “Oh, sent you back, has he? First he shoves me in the middle-class, then he chucks you out for me to support you. All part of his plan. (Resourcefully) But you double-cross him, Eliza. Don’t you come home to me. Don’t you take tuppence from me” (154).

Within Eliza’s relationship to her family of origin is also a lack of the more expected domesticity. Not only does Eliza not live with her family (nor has she for quite some time), but she is not particularly welcomed by her current stepmother, nor were her biological parents married when she was born. Doolittle has gone from relationship to relationship, never marrying until he received “middle-class” money. “Your stepmother wants to marry me. Now I’m respectable—she wants to be respectable” (153). In other words, Eliza’s life has already been one of nontraditional family relations. This biological family has never entered into a customary living arrangement, complete with marriage and/or nuclear living arrangement(s).

Alfred has, in many ways, taught her well. During his first song, “A Little Bit of

Luck,” he sings of having more than one relationship at a time: “Oh, it’s a crime for man to go philanderin’ / And fill his wife’s poor heart with grief and doubt, / . . . but / With a little bit of luck, / With a little bit of luck, / You can see the bloodhound don’t find out” (30). More importantly, he sings of alternative, non-conventional families in this song, as well.

The gentle sex was made for man to marry,
To share his nest and see his food is cooked.
The gentle sex was made for man to marry—but
With a little bit of luck,
With a little bit of luck,
You can have it all and not get hooked (29).

Eliza, Higgins, and Pickering will, by show’s end, have a secure and working relationship among the three, if not precisely the type the audience envisions while Doolittle sings this verse. Safe among the Shavian comments upon class structure, however, is the fact that Mrs. Pearce, the housekeeper, will indeed see that the threesome’s food is cooked and that they are securely taken care of. It is notable that even though it might seem to require money to have such an unorthodox living arrangement, Alfred feels that money forces him out of such understandings.

Contrasted with the vital and unconventional interactions between Eliza and Doolittle are two other cross-generational relationships: Freddie and his mother, and Higgins and his mother. Mrs. Eynsford-Hill’s stage time is considerably less in the realm of the musical, but Freddy’s relationship with her in both versions is one of careful, almost instinctive agreement. As Freddy attempts to apologize for having run into Eliza, his mother simply tells him to “get a taxi, Freddy. Do you want me to catch pneumonia?” He responds only, “I’m sorry, mother. I’ll get a taxi right away” (20). It is

¹⁰³ All dialogue quotations are from *My Fair Lady* unless otherwise noted.

because of this and similar responses that so many theatre-goers reject the notion that Eliza ends up with Freddy; he is simply not strong enough to match her in our estimation. Mrs. Higgins, on the other hand, gives as good as she gets. Neither she nor Henry tend to have the upper hand, and one senses in her responses to him an amused enjoyment of his non-social behavior. While Higgins is seen as a bad son next to Freddy's solicitous behavior towards his mother, there is no question as to which of the two is passionate enough to match Eliza's ardor for learning and life.

When one looks at the three leads and the relationship(s) between them, one nearly inescapable conclusion as to the group's uncommon association is that Higgins and Pickering are gay; certainly they replicate a traditional male/female family between them. Although the two argue and fight almost as much as Eliza and Higgins will, Pickering tends to back down, whereas Eliza will prove that Higgins can receive exactly what he serves.

As a gay couple, the two men spend their time in all-male company; Higgins' first song, "An Ordinary Man," is introduced by the line, "So here I am, a confirmed old bachelor, and likely to remain so" (43), a phrase historically used as code for homosexuality. The song itself does more than reveal his deep misogyny—it also supports this theory. First, a woman will "go on to the enthralling / Fun of overhauling / You" (43). In other words, a woman will attempt to change a man, perhaps even his inmost desires. Secondly, when one joins with a woman, one is moved away from those desires: "And so rather than do either/ You do something else that neither/ Likes at all" (43). Finally, when a man "wants to talk of Keats or Milton; / She only wants to talk of love" (43). This is not just a witty line; what would a man not want a woman to speak of

love unless it is something that makes him profoundly uncomfortable? The song ends with Higgins' suddenly quiet assertion that "I shall never let a woman in my life." There is a convention among Golden Age musicals that the lead female will usually have an "I want" song, in which she expresses her inmost wishes. Eliza's is "Wouldn't It Be Lovely?," but Higgins has one, too, and this is it. His wish is most assuredly not to have a conventional relationship with a woman. She gets what she wants by the musical's end; does he?

Higgins' other misogynistic song, "A Hymn To Him," frankly asks the question "Why can't a woman be more like a man?" This song bluntly dismisses women as worthless and praises men as the best of all creations:

One man in a million may shout a bit.
Now and then there's one with slight defects.
One perhaps whose truthfulness you doubt a bit.
But by and large we are a marvelous sex. (114).

During Higgins' encounter with Eliza after her success at the ball, he responds to what he believes is her concern: "You might marry, you know. You see, Eliza, all men are not confirmed old bachelors like me and the Colonel. Most men are the marrying sort, poor devils" (97), another phrase that has been used as code for homosexuality for a long while.¹⁰⁴

Code, within this context, allows a signifier to exist simultaneously within two different realms. In this case, "marrying sort" and "confirmed old bachelors" work to reinforce heteronormativity for the majority of the audience, but gay males (particularly) can read this speech as a stark repudiation of that dominance, particularly with Higgins'

¹⁰⁴ In fact, at the end of Shaw's original play, in a speech that was shortened for the musical, Higgins tells Eliza "Five minutes ago you were like a millstone around my neck. Now you're [sic] a tower of strength: a

addition of “poor devils.” The phrase connotes pity, which cannot exist without superiority (and presumably community).

Pickering’s specifically gay identifications are fewer, but they are significant.¹⁰⁵ It is he who knows where to buy a lady’s gown—“Whiteley’s, of course.” When asked how he knows, he replies, “Common knowledge.” It is during this exchange that Higgins turns into a fashion designer: “We mustn’t get her anything too flowery. I despise those gowns with a sort of weed here and a weed there. Something simple, modest and elegant is what’s called for. Perhaps with a sash. (He places the imaginary sash on Pickering’s hip and steps back to eye it)” (66).

The relationship between Pickering and Higgins quickly becomes that of a years-married couple, with Pickering most often assuming the role of a mother. He is the one who makes Eliza feel at home during her initial visit to the house at Wimpole Street. It is he who intervenes on her behalf when he finds Higgins’ treatment of Eliza to be too brutal; in fact, Higgins actually cautions him at one point that “much better leave her or she’ll be turning to you for sympathy” (55); similarly, Pickering is the one who suggests that Higgins move Eliza from “With blackest moss, the flowerpots were thickly crusted, one and all” to “The Owl and the Pussycat,” because it is a “charming” poem. And finally, it is Pickering who praises Higgins with something akin to worship during “You Did It,” much as any wife of the period might do. In fact, Mrs. Higgins calls the duo “a pretty pair of babies playing with your live doll” (73).

This is the upshot: there is a great deal of parent/child relationship between Eliza

consort battleship. You and I and Pickering will be three old bachelors together instead of only two men and a silly girl” (Shaw 280).

and the two men. This is not surprising, as Higgins is much older than she, and her biological father actually sells her to him.¹⁰⁵ In fact, her song, “Wouldn’t It Be Lovely?,” often attributed to the wish for a romantic relationship, could also be construed as the wish for a caring parent: she craves warmth, treats (“choc’late”) and “Someone’s head restin’ on my knee, / Warm and tender as he can be, / Who takes good care of me . . .” (26); the physical positions described in this line may reverse those exercised in a more conventional arrangement. When she arrives at the house and Higgins considers teaching her, he threatens her if she will not behave. Her response is “One would think you was my father!” Higgins replies, “If I decide to teach you, I’ll be worse than two fathers to you,” and directly gives her his handkerchief, clarifying what it is for (36). He explains her role in the experiment as if she were a child.

If you’re good and do whatever you’re told, you shall sleep in a proper bedroom and have lots to eat, and money to buy chocolates and take rides in taxis. If you’re naughty and idle you will sleep in the back kitchen among the black beetles, and be walloped by Mrs. Pearce with a broomstick. . . . If the King finds out you’re not a lady, you will be taken to the Tower of London where your head will be cut off as a warning to other presumptuous flower girls. . . . If you refuse this offer you will be the most ungrateful, wicked girl; and the angels will weep for you. (41)

Eliza’s response to this type of handling is much like that of a child: “Just You Wait” is a child’s angry reaction to parental control, fully of threats and joyous fantasies of revenge.

It is Eliza who exhibits the most movement and growth during the course of the libretto, but her growth is to that of equal status among the men, particularly Higgins. She gains an emotional and intellectual maturity that previously had been missing; this is,

¹⁰⁵ One particularly striking item is his term for his friend, Brewster Budgin, whom he calls at the Home Office. Pickering refers to him as “Boozy,” which calls to mind “Bosie,” as Lord Alfred Douglas, Oscar Wilde’s lover, was known to his intimates. Shaw knew Wilde.

¹⁰⁶ In any discussion of coding within this musical, this “selling” would surely have to stand in for marriage, which has as its basis a selling of the woman, anyway.

in fact, what creates the difficulty between them. Were this a conventional love relationship, Eliza would know “her place” within this group. After her transformation, she fits completely into neither the upper nor the lower class. This is revealed during her abortive attempt to return to the Covent Garden flower market, as well as her ignorance, after the Embassy Ball, regarding “What’s to become of me?” It is during this precise conversation, in fact, that she expresses her liminality. “We were above that in Covent Garden. . . . I sold flowers. I didn’t sell myself. Now you’ve made a lady of me, I’m not fit to sell anything else” (97).

The three characters do love each other. Pickering has apparently moved into Higgins’ house for keeps; certainly there’s never any talk of his ever going back to India. Both men speak (or sing) of their fondness for Eliza, who cannot bring herself to leave the household permanently, despite its problems. The three continually redefine their relationship as emotionally turbulent—but loving, and also as anything but a traditional family. During the scene after the Embassy Ball, Eliza persists in attempting to discover some emotional connection with Higgins. She does this as many children do, by provoking any kind of response, even a negative one. She is described during Higgins’ outbursts as “drinking in his emotion like nectar and nagging him to provoke a further supply” and “thrilling with hidden joy” at his explosion (99). During Higgins’ “A Hymn to Him,” Pickering, when apprised by the housekeeper that she hopes the Colonel can find Eliza because Higgins shall miss her, Pickering loudly declaims, “Blast Mr. Higgins! *I shall miss her*” (115).

The trio not only exists in an unusual relationship, but the three are relatively aware that they do. During “A Hymn To Him,” Pickering pursues two separate telephone

conversations with the authorities to try and obtain help in tracking the missing Eliza.

The first is with the police.

No relation at all. Let's just say a good friend. (He laughs good-humoredly) Hmph? (A troubled look clouds his face) Now, see here, my good man, I'm not at all pleased with the tenor of that question. What the girl does here is our affair. Your affair is to get her back so she can continue doing it!" (113).

The strongest textual support for this comes during the scene between Higgins and Eliza at his mother's house.

Eliza: What am I to come back for?

Higgins: (Heartily) For the fun of it. That's why I took you on.

Eliza: And you may throw me out tomorrow if I don't do everything you want me to?

Higgins: Yes: and you may walk out tomorrow if I don't do everything you want me to. (120-121).

When Higgins suggests that she might marry Pickering, Eliza replies passionately

That's not what I want and don't you think it. I've always had chaps enough wanting me that way. . . . That's not the sort of feeling I want from you. I want a little kindness. I know I'm a common ignorant girl, and you a book-learned gentleman, but I'm not dirt under your feet. What I done—(Correcting herself) What I did was not for the dresses and the taxis: I did it because we were pleasant together and I come—came to care for you; not to want you to make love to me, and not forgetting the difference between us, but more friendly like. (121).

This particular conflict culminates in Higgins' interruption of Eliza's "Without You," with "Eliza, you're magnificent! Five minutes ago you were a millstone around my neck. Now you're a tower of strength, a consort battleship! I like you like this!" (124). While he misses Eliza's point, Higgins is restating that this is a meeting of equals that allows them to be at their best, and to continue on "for the fun of it."

Musicals, of course, tend to save the moments of strongest romance for song.

Therefore it is valuable to examine several of the songs in *My Fair Lady* in closer detail.

Eliza's "Wouldn't It Be Lovely?" is often interpreted as a wish for romantic love although the implication is not necessarily present in the language used. "I Could Have Danced All Night" occupies a similar position. Nowhere in the lyric does Eliza state she has fallen in love with Higgins; rather she sings as much on the subject of her accomplishments as anything else. "I could have spread my wings / And done a thousand things / I've never done before" (67). The romantic inferences come from the next lines: "I only know when he / Began to dance with me / I could have danced, danced, danced all night!" (67). Stephen Citron quotes these lines and asserts that "obviously she has fallen for Higgins, and we remember well he will 'never let a woman in his life'" (271). These lines never actually say (or even imply) anything romantic. Eliza has never danced to celebrate an accomplishment of this magnitude (learning to speak properly, and rising in class) and it is hardly surprising that she would want to continue the celebration.

An oddity of this supposedly romantic pairing is that the two never actually dance together, alone and uninterrupted. During the dance to which "I Could Have Danced All Night" refers ("The Rain in Spain"), all three leads dance together in triumph. It is not a romantic dance (e.g., a waltz), but a series of riotous Spanish dances, including an habanera, a fandango, and a *jota*. During the "Embassy Waltz," the two do begin to dance, but are quickly interrupted by Zoltan Karpathy, who is trying to discern Eliza's identity.

Higgins' "romantic" song, "I've Grown Accustomed to Her Face," is much the same. He sings of her presence in his life, but never uses specific intimations that this is anything romantic. In fact, this song brilliantly conveys that this is *not* a traditional coupling. It is in the key of C major, yet never actually ends a phrase on the tonic; this

never gives the listener a sense of completeness that would be expected from a love song. The first line ends on D, and the second on F, neither of which complete the melodic phrase in a manner approaching finality. Even the final phrase, which does close the song on a tonic note, is notated as spoken within the score. Particularly when viewed as a romantic love song, this melodic outline supports the supposition that this is a non-romantic couple.



Figure 4.1: "I've Grown Accustomed to Her Face."

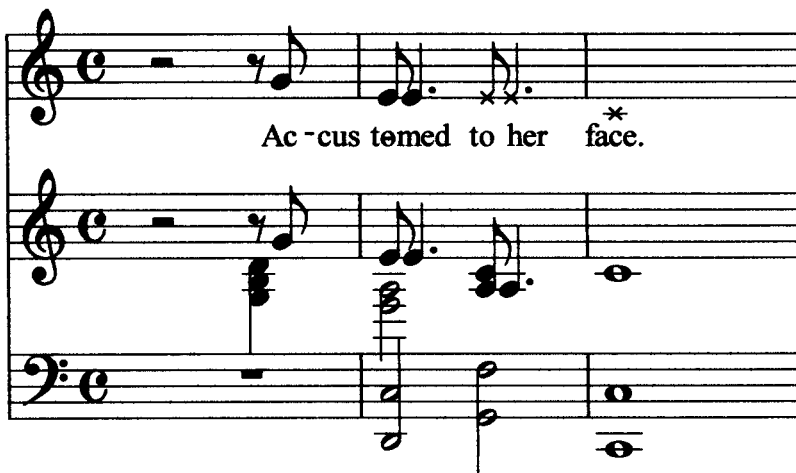


Figure 4.2: Final bars of vocal line, "I've Grown Accustomed to her Face."

Eliza, Higgins, and Pickering are out of step with the long-established musical communities, where the characters often sing together. In keeping with the subversive families examined in this chapter—where the characters sing together far less often—

these three join voices together only during one song: “The Rain in Spain,” wherein they celebrate Eliza’s achievements. Even here, most of the song consists of solo lines, with the title line (functioning as chorus) being the notable exception.

Higgins and Eliza, the musical’s supposedly romantic couple, never sing together at all, except in this song with Pickering present. There are certain factors within the score that bring them together. Still, without the presence of the more traditional signifiers such as duets or dances, one is led to suspect that traditional love relationships play little to no part in their lives. Each begins the musical singing in a flat key:

Higgins’ first two songs are in B-flat, and Eliza begins the score in the key of F. As the work progresses, each moves toward a common key, C-major, where their last songs settle.

More significant is the shape and rhythm of their melodic lines. Eliza sings with a great deal more step-wise motion and with even, non-dotted rhythms, as in the following example from “Wouldn’t It Be Loverly?”



Figure 4.3: “Wouldn’t It Be Loverly”

Higgins, on the other hand, possesses music that seems to consist almost entirely of dotted rhythms, with a great many melodic leaps. The following example is from his first song, “Why Can’t the English.”



Figure 4.4: “Why Can’t The English.”

By the time Higgins sings “I’ve Grown Accustomed to Her Face,” his music has moved to Eliza’s step-wise motion with very few dotted rhythms.



Figure 4.5: “I’ve Grown Accustomed to Her Face,” Melodic contour

Finally, as yet another example of non-traditional musical classification, the form of Eliza’s first song under Higgins’ roof (“Just You Wait”) is an inverted mirror structure of Higgins’ first song, “An Ordinary Man.” Higgins’ song begins with a stormy section (“A”) followed by a calm section (“B”), and so on. Following this lettering, “An Ordinary Man” plots as ABABAB(A), with (A) acting as the final extensions that end the song. Conversely, “Just You Wait” can be shown as BAB, or a shorted form of Higgins’ song turned inside out. They both have periods of calm followed by periods of storm, but never seem to quite match as to when they reach them.

Despite the original author’s intentions, and despite the lack of definite and time-honored romantic signifiers, the debate may never be fully resolved for many audience members. Eliza and Higgins provide superlative matches for each other, however they choose to act on that correspondence. In the final analysis, it is impossible to not imagine them staying together in some fashion. Even Shaw, who told the world in his famous epilogue to *Pygmalion* that Eliza would marry Freddy, put it this way: “Eliza’s instinct

tells her not to marry Higgins. It does not tell her to give him up. It is not in the slightest doubt as to his remaining one of the strongest personal interests in her life” (Shaw 282). According to the story Shaw puts forth in this epilogue, Eliza continues to “meddle” in the lives of the two bachelors in the house at Wimpole Street. “She knows that Higgins does not need her, just as her father did not need her . . . yet has a sense, too, that his indifference is deeper than the infatuation of commoner souls” (Shaw 294). Even Shaw’s traditional ending (the marriage between Eliza and Freddy) extended outward to a non-traditional yet binding collection of family members. The musical’s unconventional family still replicates something of the traditional nuclear family structure, with Pickering often taking the maternal role(s). However, these three allow each other far more latitude to alter roles than the much larger family formed by the end of *Babes in Arms*. The debate still thunders forward regarding the *type* of family formed by these characters (romantic or otherwise). It is obvious that the presence of this debate reflects American society’s rigidity in understanding both “family” and “romance.” It is to be hoped that the discussion will open new understandings of these ideas as time passes.

Contemporary Marriage and Family

Current society contains many different versions of “family,” some of which openly compete with each other. Because of changes within science and society itself, present-day families are understood as less reliant on “biogenetic traditions” than previous ones were (Dolgin 15). These changes include, to name just a few, easier access to divorce, scientific advances in childbirth and conception, and a more accepting societal view of sexual variance.

Reactions to these changes differ from those of previous decades in that now significant segments of the society accept, or at least justify, such changes. Certainly, many people within the society view such changes in the family as signaling a disastrous breakdown in the social order, the ‘disintegration of the family’ at the center of that phenomenon. However, others focus on different aspects of the transforming family, especially the increased choices open to people creating and living as families, and see change as more valuable than disruptive. (Dolgin 29).

Other items have added to the changes, such as the emergence in the 1980s of AIDS.

While a very large number of people in the United States do not live in a traditional house as defined by Eleanor Macklin,

the groups in North America that have been hardest hit by HIV infection (gay men, impoverished urban residents, particularly people of color, and intravenous drug users) are even less likely to live in this ‘official family’ that inhabits national imaginations and is institutionalized in law and social policy (Sears and Adam 19).

Popular culture has reflected this diversity, as well. As early as the 1970s, television was showing blended families (*The Brady Bunch*), motherless or fatherless families (*The Courtship of Eddie’s Father*), gay families (*Love, Sidney*) and “a circle of friends who think of themselves as a family congregating at a Boston bar on ‘Cheers’” (Mintz 184). Society at large has finally caught up with musical theatre, which was utilizing variations of these as long ago as *Babes In Arms*.

“Making A Home:” William Finn’s “Marvin Songs”

William Finn is probably the least known of any of the composers examined in this dissertation. His music is the most idiosyncratic; his works are equally quirky, they do not spawn hit songs,¹⁰⁷ and fewer people know the works’ titles. His musicals can be described as cult shows: intensely beloved by those who do know them. He himself says

that in college “I discovered I had a *voice*. A voice of my own, a colloquial, slangy voice that hadn’t been explored in the theatre” (qtd. in Kasha 114). His tempos are adventurous, rarely settling down into an easily defined, settled rhythm. And his shows are through-sung, although unlike operatic recitative (to which most through-sung work is usually compared at some point), Finn transforms everyday speech into short, highly rhythmic, repetitive and extraordinarily distinctive fragments. So distinctive are these fragments that he can use them almost like a *leitmotiv*; when they return, they are recognizable. In fact, the return of these fragments is what holds many of his songs together; Finn says that his structures “veer all over the place—when they’re working well, that is. My structure really *is* structured, very strict, but if you catch on to it, I’m doing something grievously wrong” (qtd in Kasha 116). He saves his most conventional song forms for moments of strong reflection and/or emotion. His characters are often described as neurotic and intelligent; in fact, the irony is that these sometimes very neurotic characters are extremely aware of their neuroses, which gives them a dramatic psychological depth not always found in traditional musical theatre.

Finn’s music has often been compared to that of Sondheim. The reasons for this would have to include both men’s use of *ostinato* accompaniment as well as the types of characters both men write about (well-educated and sophisticated). Finn’s music probably reflects the quirky neurotic tendencies of his characters better than anyone else ever could. He accomplishes this through the *ostinato*, his chromaticism (which makes it more difficult to note find the root key of a song), and his interesting rhythms. His time signatures are extraordinarily common (the majority seem to be 4/4), but the irregular

¹⁰⁷ Even Stephen Sondheim has had one major hit, “Send in the Clowns,” as well as spawning huge numbers of standards.

length of his lines, coupled with the off-beat accents that characterize his songs, can make them *sound* like their singers *think*. Within those parameters, these characters all sound a great deal alike—related musically, if not biologically.

The work(s) to be examined here is a trilogy of one-act musicals: *In Trousers* (1979), *March of the Falsettos* (1981), and *Falsettoland* (1990). All three originally premiered as separate pieces at Playwrights Horizons. Known collectively as “the Marvin musicals” after the protagonist, the latter two have been combined (with one song from the first) into one evening of theatre entitled simply *Falsettos* (1991). *Falsettos* opened on Broadway in 1992, the first time any of the three works had played there.

Each successive work shows more depth, more characterization (and more characters), and more musical variety than the one before it.¹⁰⁸ Each also gives the women more individuality and character. All three shows cast masculinity into a liminal space (see the titles alone for evidence of this). Each contains an exceptional amount of meta-theatre, with characters directly addressing the audience, as well as performing inner musicals, complete with titles and scenes. Finally, the through-sung structure, particularly in Finn’s distinctive (to the point of eccentric) style, subverts traditional musical theatre structure, much as that original structure subverts the idea of “realism.”

Since the three musicals were in fact intended to be a trilogy, I will discuss each in its turn before examining the three as a whole work. The first work is 1979’s four-character *In Trousers* (1979). The narrative comprises Marvin’s acceptance of the fact that he is more attracted to men than to women, and the eventual breakup of his marriage. The musical’s sense of time is extremely fluid; when Marvin finds his adult life too

stressful, he regresses to fourteen. Flashbacks occur in the middle of other scenes, present-day scenes occur in the midst of flashbacks, and characters from Marvin's past comment on his present and vice-versa. As the trilogy progresses, Finn's treatment of the female characters moves from archetypal to warm and personal (paralleling in many respects Marvin's progression, as well). In keeping with that, only one of the three female characters in *In Trousers* is named; they are, in order of appearance, "Marvin's Wife" (known as Trina during the next two musicals), "Marvin's High School Sweetheart," and his ninth-grade teacher, Miss Goldberg.

In Trousers' "now" is the period during which Marvin acts on his attraction for men, his wife discovers this, and he leaves. One of its major flashbacks is to their wedding, with his high school Sweetheart and Miss Goldberg as guests, and an ominous beginning. As the latter two sing, the Wife joins in for a moment, interrupting herself to look "for Marvin offstage" and, baffled at his absence, asks "Marvin?" (52). He is "pushed onstage" (54), is visibly uncomfortable, and when the time comes to break the glass, he misses two separate times. Ultimately, the Wife has to smash it.

Directly on the heels of the wedding sequence, Marvin sings "How the Body Falls Apart" as he gently tears his Wife's wedding dress off her (and apart). This is a complex lyric, concerning several things at once. "How the body falls apart / First the groin and then the heart. . . . / Things on which we most depend / Seem to fail us in the end" (57). Not only is this lyric indicative of Marvin's realization of this true sexuality, but pictures a disintegrating marriage; the "body" is not just a physical one, but the corporate one formed by the marriage.

¹⁰⁸ This is, in part, because the original work, *In Trousers*, evolved from a song cycle. (Bishop 1). It also serves its subject: as the family onstage becomes increasingly unconventional, the musicals themselves

Marvin leaves his Wife to be with his lover, Whizzer, in “Packing Up,” as he admits his inability to be a traditional family man/father.

Whizzer will act very parental,
Completely gentle,
Absolutely swell.
Unlike me who’s at his worst
When he lacks a fee,
Whizzer beats a bunt to first;
I’ll just watch T.V. (71)¹⁰⁹

As the song ends, Marvin summarizes his reasons for going: “Pack it up ‘cause this way shits, / Maybe that will too” (72). In other words, there are no guarantees (an idea which will recur at the end of *Falsettoland*) and no form of family is necessarily perfect.

When the Wife discovers what is happening, she sings “I’m Breaking Down” (directly to the audience), a song which discusses her side of the disintegrating relationship. “I’m breaking down. / It’s so upsetting how I found / That what’s rectangular is round” (70). As she continues, she sings about her child, as well. “My life is shitty. / And my kid seems like an idi- / -Ot to me. / Oh, no, that’s sick” (69). For a traditional wife such Trina, any criticism of the accepted family structure is seen with apprehension, even by those who do the criticizing. In other words, even just a casual remark regarding her child (while her world collapses) is a reason for guilt and self-reproach.

Despite this, Trina is the first to suggest that there are alternate forms of family as Marvin leaves. “Breakfast Over Sugar” is most obviously about the difficulties of letting go. The opening stage directions read “His wife, understanding everything, wants him to stay. Marvin wants to go. Or Marvin wants to stay. She wants him to go. Anyway, he’s

become more so.

going” (73). But there is more to the song than just this. The Wife asks “May we talk as friends? / . . . I cry as if on cue. / Hold me / Hold him, too. / But stay” (73). Marvin will attempt to put this into practice at the beginning of the second work of the trilogy, *March of the Falsettos*, as he sings “I want it all.” He will ultimately discover that he cannot have it all, but that none of the people in his life will leave him completely.

The final song in *In Trousers*, the title song, is Marvin’s recounting of a dream. It is in an uncharacteristic minor key, and as such is quite melancholy. As with each title of the one-act musicals, this one points up gender ambiguity. The men and women in the dream are all dressed in trousers; this masculinizes the women and casts doubt on the masculinity of the males, as well. There is a tradition, particularly in opera, of “breeches” or “trousers” roles, in which sopranos portray young men who have not yet reached puberty and whose voices have not yet changed and (presumably) are not yet sexually active, or fully “masculine.” “In Trousers” tells the story of four women and five men: “Four young ladies sat around and said they’d never lose their love. / And then they lost their love” (85). In this case, it is the women who are named and the men who remain anonymous, with the exception of Marvin himself. “I was a young man once, in trousers, one of five.” But “four women and five men won’t meet” (85).

The final section of the song is

Because we’re dreaming in trousers,
Laughing in trousers,
Playing in trousers,
Making music in trousers,
Making movies in trousers,
People fighting in trousers,
People singing and dancing and writing in trousers,
People waiting in trousers,

¹⁰⁹ Baseball will be the item that reunites Marvin and Whizzer at the beginning of *Falsettoland*, as Whizzer does in fact assist Marvin’s son Jason in playing.

People crying in trousers,
People living in trousers,
People screwing in trousers,
In trousers, in trousers,
In trousers,
In trousers. (87)

Trousers cover the gender of those who wear them. All these activities listed in this song match a portion of the play itself, as well as being average, everyday behavior. The song is thereby at once a commentary on what has transpired onstage and the audience's lives. Gender ambiguity notwithstanding, human beings have a great deal in common.

March of the Falsettos premiered on April 9, 1981. The cast of characters is larger than that of *In Trousers*, and each is named. Marvin is now living with Whizzer, his male partner. His ex-wife, Trina, is still not coping well with the situation, and begins attending some counseling sessions with Marvin's psychiatrist, Mendel. The two—Trina and Mendel—fall in love and Mendel proposes. Meanwhile, Marvin's desire to "have it all" is driving a wedge between himself and Whizzer. When Trina's new marriage to Mendel is announced, Marvin explodes in a song that culminates when he slaps her. Trina and Whizzer both renounce him, leaving him with no relationship but that between his son Jason and himself. Since the adults have basically ignored Jason and his concerns throughout the piece, this is a hopeful ending.

Finn tends to begin his musicals with what would, under normal circumstances, be narrators describing the characters. However, since the characters are describing themselves, and since no official explanations are offered, the viewer/listener is plunged *in media res*, and is given information that may not make sense until the evening's end. *March of the Falsettos* (as well as 1998's *A New Brain*) are particularly strong examples of this technique. *March of the Falsettos* begins with the four male characters (Jason,

Marvin, Mendel, and Whizzer) singing “Four Jews In a Room Bitching.” The song has little to do with the plot of the musical, except that each comment has everything to do with the various characters’ personalities. And once again, it calls gender into question: the four characters who “bitch” are all male; the word has historically been associated with females in American society. This will resonate strongly in a sort of an echo; the title song is later sung by the same four men.

The primary movement throughout *March of the Falsettos* is Marvin’s (re)adjustment to his new family structure(s). In his first solo, he sings of wanting a “tight-knit family,” and wanting it all: “kid, wife and lover.” He will actually end the trilogy with a version of this family, but one of the lessons of these musicals is that it may simply not be possible to have it all; just as he gains such an extended family, Whizzer dies.

The formation of this family is difficult; the Brechtian libretto actually contains instances of various characters helping each other as they all reach for an extended household. For example, Mendel is instantly smitten with Trina upon meeting her, but is so tongue-tied that Jason has to take over the onstage action to persuade Mendel to propose (and incidentally takes over his own therapy, trading positions with Mendel as well as taking over the counselor’s dance moves). Jason finally announces to the audience “This is how you make a marriage proposal. (Starts to exit, stops to indicate to Mendel that he should propose. Marvin is sitting there, watching the whole thing)” (144). After the proposal has been accepted, Marvin argues with Whizzer (both use the audience as mediator), and then repeats his desire for a “tight-knit family,” obviously believing that he is losing such a community. Mendel, on the other hand, believes he has

acquired it: “It’s embarrassing, but (singing) / I’ve got a nice, tight family; / Son with a brain and nice, bright mother” (146). This presumed proprietorship continues on:

Marvin: I want . . .
Mendel: I got . . .
Marvin: I want . . .
Both: It all.
I’m sure we’re gonna come through it.
No doubt the bastard prepares.
We’re needy and wanting.
We’re greedy as swine.
Mendel: I just bought a fam’ly.
Marvin: The fam’ly was mine. (147-148).

The competition continues as Mendel and Trina make their new home using the furniture that had been Marvin and Whizzer’s, including those items thrown during their fight. By the end of “Making a Home,” “Jason enters and sits between Trina and Mendel” (167). Marvin’s reaction to the finality of this new family is to explode and slap Trina, an action which results in everyone onstage pulling completely away from him, with the exception of his son.

Jason begins *March of the Falsettos* having great difficulty with the new state of affairs around him. In a flashback, he sings “Daddy is a prick” and “Daddy isn’t mine” (103). His first solo is “My Father’s a Homo,” wherein he expresses his reaction to the conditions that have confused him. “My mother’s no wife / And my father’s no man, / No man at all” (123). Literally, Tina *is* no wife at the moment, and Jason has only a limited understanding (as do they all at this point) of how Marvin can continue his relationship with his son. The musical ends with a (musical) variant of Jason’s flashback lines, when he sings “I hate the world,” but that “I love my dad” (172). The final song is sung by Marvin to Jason as the two face each other over a chess board; Marvin apologizes to Jason and asks to start over: “Kid, be my son. / What I’ve done to you was

rotten.”

There are concrete familial images throughout this piece of the trilogy. During the song “Everyone Tells Jason to See A Psychiatrist,” the original nuclear family of Trina, Marvin, and Jason sing the following lines in a “group, as if for photograph.”

What a mess this is,
This family;
Experts can see
This is so.
(Photo flash; they lean back, out of photo pose)
Photographs can't
Capture our magic.
We're simply tragic. (125).

It is during this song that Jason first seeks out Whizzer as a father figure; as early as *In Trousers*, Marvin expected his partner to fulfill that role. As the other adults pressure him to see Mendel professionally, Jason tells them that he does not think it necessary “just because you’ve failed as parents” (126), and then asks to speak with Whizzer about the subject. Whizzer is careful in answering noncommittally, but eventually moves into an “absolutely, Jason,” when he sees the reactions of Trina and Marvin behind Jason’s back. Thus, all three parental figures agree on the question of their child.

The title song of this musical is also its exploration of liminal gender. “March of the Falsettos” is another dream, this time Jason’s. Like the musical’s opening, it involves the four male characters. “Falsetto” as a designation of singing style descends from the word “false,” and is often defined as an “artificial” voice, higher than one’s “natural” or full voice. Both men and women have falsettos, but it is far more pronounced (and obvious) in men’s voices. It is also associated with immaturity and artifice, and because it involves a higher than traditional sound for men, it carries with it a disruption of gender signification. The four ask in song “Who is man enough / To march to / March of the

falsettos?” (150). It is during this dream that Jason asks bluntly if, since his father is gay, “Does this mean that I’m a fairy?” Notably, just as he does with the question of Jason’s therapy, it is Whizzer who provides an answer. “What a stupid theory. . . . Whizzer says it doesn’t, dearie” (151-152). During “Father to Son,” the last song, Marvin offers his son support and counsel, telling him to “watch, as you sing, how your voice gets much lower. / You’ll be, kid, a man, kid, whatever the song” (175); manhood has nothing to do with the things the characters have worried about. Jason has worried throughout the musical about what being gay means: will he become gay or does it mean that his father’s “no man at all?” Masculinity becomes a dead issue by the end of *March of the Falsettos*, as both Marvin and his son discover that acceptance leads to freedom from the fear that conventional, traditional responses to “masculinity” bring.

Falsettoland opened June 8, 1990; it is set in 1981, the year of the imminence of AIDS. The audience knows more about this than the characters do, which allows Finn simply to present actions without much explanation or preaching. Once again, there are two more characters in this musical than the one which preceded it: Cordelia (a “kosher caterer”) and her life partner, Dr. Charlotte, who characterize themselves as “the lesbians from next door.” As the play begins, Marvin and Whizzer have been apart for some time. The rest of the cast is in attendance at Jason’s Little League baseball game, during which Whizzer appears, due to a prior request from Jason asking for help in playing the game. The two men reunite during the game. As Jason prepares for his bar mitzvah, Whizzer becomes ill with a mysterious ailment, eventually dying. While the synopsis makes the work sound dark and depressing, it is actually positive and uplifting.

As this final section of the trilogy begins, the characters emerge from the

darkness, shining large flashlights at the audience as they search for examples from the list they sing: “Homosexuals. Women with children.” As the second verse of this opening song begins, Trina and Jason sing the line “Crazy families, “ a phrase which finishes (with two others) on the line “. . . who are trying to expand” (182). This song is one of the few times all seven characters sing together, and even here it is only briefly.

Whizzer’s appearance at the baseball game hearkens back to Marvin’s original hopes for his new family in *In Trousers*. Trina’s response to his appearance echoes her “crazy families,” as she sings “Just what I wanted at a Little League game. / My ex-husband’s ex-lover. / Isn’t that what every mother / Dreams about having / At a Little League game?” (194). During the game, the entire assemblage sings, with the exception of Jason, using the word “we” several times.

The next songs mirror the scene from *March of the Falsettos*, in which Marvin and Trina unite over Jason’s therapy, and Whizzer eventually aids in making the decision. In *Falsettoland*, Marvin and Trina are arguing about Jason’s upcoming bar mitzvah; they disagree about everything until an exasperated Jason tells them he no longer wants the ceremony at all, at which point they close ranks. It is only Mendel’s intervention that re-establishes the bar-mitzvah. Mendel steps in to lighten the mood with a song that emphasizes the trilogy’s theme of growing up, but also that of working with the families one has. The song, “Everyone Hates His Parents,” is relatively subversive of traditional family values by itself, although as it moves forward, it becomes clear that Mendel does not mean that one does not also love one’s parents, sometimes simultaneously.

Everyone hates his parents,
Don't be ashamed.
You'll grow up,
You'll come through,
You'll have kids
And they'll hate you, too.
Oh, everyone hates his parents,
But I confess:
You grow up,
You get old,
You hate less. . . .

Everyone hates his parents,
That's in the Torah.
It's what
History shows;
In fact, God said to Moses:
'Moses, everyone hates his parents.
That's how it is.'
And God knew
Because God hated his. . . .

Everyone hates his parents,
Now I see why.
But in time
They'll cool out,
And you'll think
They were only fooling.
It's a strange thing 'bout parents—
Push turns to shove.
What was hate becomes, more or less, love. (212-213)

This final line, of course, holds true for this unconventional family. Trina will even sing shortly of how she cares for Whizzer, and Jason will show his love for the entire group of “parents.”

Whizzer becomes ill as Dr. Charlotte worries about the appearance of a new disease. As his physical functioning is impaired, the rest of the cast echo “everything will be alright” to Marvin’s solo lines, supporting him even without his realizing it. Trina sings “Holding to the Ground,” which discusses the new family and its supportiveness in

detail. From across the stage, and from out of the scene, she gives Marvin a hopeful smile as he and Whizzer leave to see Dr. Charlotte. She then sings “Families aren’t what they were. / Thank God there’s a husband and a child whom I adore. / But then there’s more. / So many more” (223). She goes on to note that she might struggle to not “care about this man who Marvin loves. / But that’s my life” (224). She will simply try to “keep sane as the rules keep changing” (224). From here to the musical’s end, the group will act as, and be considered as, a family. Jason sings that if Whizzer could get well, “my dad would laugh, / My mom stop crying” (237). At the hospital, the two same-sex couples sing that they are all “Unlikely Lovers.”

In order to include Whizzer, Jason has decided to have the bar mitzvah at the hospital. The scene begins with Trina taking a family picture of the entire group, a genuine version of the pained and ironic pose Marvin, Trina, and Jason assumed in *March of the Falsettos*. When Mendel sings of Jason’s ancestry, it includes everyone. “Son of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. / Son of Marvin, son of Trina, son of Whizzer, son of Mendel. . . . And godchild to the lesbians from next door” (244).

Whizzer dies during the final song, Marvin’s “What Would I Do;” this is accomplished simply by having him disappear from the scene. The stage directions state that “First Jason, then everyone else, gathers around Marvin” (248). Andre Bishop, the artistic director of Playwrights Horizons during the time of the two last Marvin plays, writes in his introduction to *The Marvin Songs* of this moment.

The final image of *Falsettoland* has such power, I think. Marvin is alone at the end, aware that he too may die, yet he sings defiantly, proudly, that he would like to believe that he would ‘do it again and again and again.’ Suddenly, from the darkness, his family arrives and circles him protectively, lovingly; his ‘family’ consists of all the characters—gay, straight, male, female, unlikely lovers all. They’re a tiny band, perhaps,

but they are *there* (emph. his). (Bishop vii)

The reference to “tiny band” is from both the introductory and the closing moments of *Falsettoland*. As Mendel searches out groups at the beginning with his flashlight, he sings of a “teeny, tiny band,” focusing his light on the actual pit band. The final words of the play are a reprise of his opening, with the phrase now referring to the characters onstage. “Homosexuals. / Women with children. / Short insomniacs. / *We’re* a teeny, tiny band (emph. mine)” (248).

Each of the one-acts emphasizes Marvin’s wish for a family, and his inability to maintain a traditional one; even after he leaves Trina for Whizzer, he is not content to simply pair off with him. *In Trousers* contains the first song that addresses this directly. Marvin cannot act on what is missing in his life (“In my mind I’m kissing / Men”) because

I have a family.
And a family pet.
And a family that will get upset
When it learns why I show stress.

I have a family
With a wife who’s perfect in many ways,
And a dazzling son
Who will earn his dad straight A’s. . . . (16).

About halfway through *In Trousers*, Marvin reprises a song entitled “I Swear I Won’t Ever Again,” which reappears after each occasion in which Marvin has had an experience with another man. This last time, all four of the characters sing “No one destroys the family,” with Marvin finishing “Least not me and them, / Me and men” (47). While Marvin most likely means that he does not wish to break up his nuclear family, he never will actually destroy his family; by the end of *Falsettoland*, he has simply enlarged its

scope and possibility immeasurably.

In almost exactly the same spot in the second musical,¹¹⁰ Marvin sings

I want a tight-knit family.
I want a group that harmonizes.
I want my wife and kid and friend
To pretend
Time will mend
Our pain. . . .
I swear we're gonna come through it.
I fear we'll probably fight,
But nothing's impossible.
Live by your wit—
Kid, wife and lover will have to admit
I was right.
I cushioned the fall.
I want it all. (98-99)

By the time of *Falsettoland*, where the fact of family has been assumed, this spot is taken up with “The Baseball Game,” where Marvin and Whizzer reunite.

Marvin will prove to have “it all” only very briefly. The characters have scarcely managed to construct a working family before Whizzer dies, proving just how fragile such relationships (and human life) can be. Yet the rest of this unconventional family rushes to support Marvin after Whizzer’s death; this new series of loving relationships *can* survive, enduring even the death of one of its members.

Each of the three pieces that make up the Marvin musicals, like the other two musicals examined earlier in this chapter, is extremely meta-theatrical. There are too many such moments to list all of them, but some are more outstanding than the rest. *In Trousers* has two plays within the play. The first, which bears a much more marked resemblance to those of the latter two musicals in the trilogy, is “The Rape of Miss Goldberg by Marvin (A Fantasy Which is Better Abstracted).” Marvin’s Sweetheart

introduces each scene, much as others will do in the later two musicals. It is during this short inner musical that an important lyric couplet recurs: “Marvin always gets the things he wants. / Except the things he wants” (45). This thought will return in the later musicals, as well, as will be seen particularly in *March of the Falsettos*. What marks Marvin’s ultimate maturity is that he realizes life is full of compromises, and that he simply must make do with what he has (had).

The (non-musical) play-within-a-musical in *In Trousers* is the story of Columbus, starring Marvin as a fourteen-year-old; this is the only time in the trilogy that this metatheatrical moment will be entirely spoken. But it is noteworthy that Columbus is an explorer, dependent on a woman (Isabella in this version is in love with him) whom he leaves. A “new world,” is in fact what Marvin and those around him will eventually make. Marvin finds great joy in being cast as the lead of his school play; not only does this make for great metatheatricality, but it allows the women around him to admire him without his being actually present in their lives.

“Marvin at the Psychiatrist,” the “three-part mini-opera” within *March of the Falsettos*, is introduced by Whizzer. The scene elucidates more of the relationships between the characters, with each psychiatric session concentrating on one of Marvin’s family members: his lover, his ex-wife, and his son. “A Day in Falsettoland,” the similar set-piece from *Falsettoland*, is slightly different. Each scene is introduced by a different character; as this play has begun to assume “family” simply exists, the introductions confirm it. This song, taken with the one after it, examines the interactions of each of the three different couples.

¹¹⁰ These songs function as Marvin’s “I want” songs, and such songs are usually placed near the second spot within a musical. These are each from that general area.

“Hey kids, let’s put on a show!” The Meta-theatrical Musical Family

In 1940, Louise Pinkey Sooy and Virginia Woodbridge’s *Plan Your Own Home* began by asking female readers, “If all the world’s a stage, what drama is being presented within your four walls? For what parts are the members of your home cast? As the director of your production, are you, the homemaker, creating a backdrop against which the story of your family life may be sympathetically and beautifully portrayed?” Thus, even before the 1950s, theatricality was a potent metaphor for modern domesticity (Spigel 163).

It is Spigel’s argument that the nuclear family as popularized by the 1950s sitcoms was especially meta-theatrical. Instead of television mirroring reality, reality began to mirror television’s representations. The situation comedies of the era “self-consciously reflected back on their own theatricality, self-consciously suggesting that family life itself was nothing but a middle-class social convention in which people acted out certain roles for each other” (Spigel 10). Lucy Ricardo was already in show business, despite her claims to the contrary. Even in those 1950 programs not based in show business, there is a dramatic representation of role performance, sometimes repeated ad infinitum, with housewives not only greeting their children after school with milk and cookies, but discussing these actions with them, or with their spouses. Of course, this type of continual (re)presentation served as an outlet for cultural anxiety, at a time when the family was ready for extraordinary change.

Much like those sit-coms, the musicals examined in this chapter exhibit a hugely reflexive meta-theatricality, although each one is quite different in how it opts to demonstrate that style of drama. The teenagers in *Babes in Arms* have spent their lives around stage performers, are stage performers themselves, and intend to make a success of their show not just for the money, but because they wish to perform their success for their biological families of origin. Eliza does much the same. Not only does she

consciously perform the idea of class, but as she begins performing a new version of herself, she cannot quite find where the audience and where the other performers fit into her life. Finally, of course, Marvin and his family are exceptionally aware of the theatre audience, often conversing directly with them, and deliberately performing metatheatrical performances directly to them. Other shows concerning family have much the same type of theatrical awareness; many of them are about performing families, in fact.

Why this fascination with performance? Why the connection between family and self-reflexive theatre troupe? It seems that within the more traditional families, there is a self-policing anxiety in effect wherein members monitor the performances of both themselves and those around them in order to ensure the proper roles are, in fact, being fulfilled. As families become less traditional, the musicals about them seem to become more intensely and consciously meta-theatrical, perhaps from a larger need to make certain that the roles are being fulfilled; if there are no traditional roles, those who fulfill them may not be executing them properly or completely. In effect, non-traditional family members watch each other and themselves to make sure the family is effective.

Conclusion

A “major feature of communal inquiry since Rousseau is its nostalgia for something that has passed. . . . Community, it seems, is rediscovered only to be lost in the same gesture; not only can’t we define community, but we no longer can have it either (Barr 4). As family is a paradigmatic community, the same would hold true for that group. Given, however, the ideal of theatrical *communitas*, perhaps these ideas are available only through the stage, musical or otherwise.

Community itself has been defined as privileging

unity over difference, immediacy over mediation, sympathy over recognition of the limits of one's understanding of others from their point of view. Community is an understandable dream, expressing a desire for selves that are transparent to one another, relationships of mutual identification, social closeness and comfort. (Young 301)

Despite this, sociologists find one commonality among the various definitions of community: there has been a distinct movement within popular culture (and theatre) "from concepts of community conceived in terms of homogeneity to concepts deriving from heterogeneity, from community based on commonality to community dependent on difference" (Barr 1-2). I would posit that this has held true throughout the period covered by this chapter. In *Babes in Arms*, Val tells the assembled teens "It may appear on the surface that all our ideas are a little different, but when we put them all together I think we ought to get something interesting" (I-2-16). Higgins and Eliza base their enjoyment of each other's company on the differences between them. Finally, of course, *Falsettos*' plot is predicated largely on the acknowledgement of difference, actually utilizing it to create community and commonality.

Wandor believes that families today are possibly "people in groupings, defined by political or social common interests, rather than biological or sexual relationships" (243). One element that is left out of that definition, at least within these works, is the concept of some kind of supportive love, perhaps more intentionally formed than biologically generated. In support of this idea is Coontz' commentary on contemporary families:

With 50% of American children living in something other than a married-couple family with both biological parents present, and with the tremendous variety of male and female responsibilities in today's different

families, the time for abstract pronouncements about good or bad family structures and correct or incorrect parental roles is past. How a family functions is more important than its structure or its formal roles. (Coontz *Are* 157)

Ultimately, family is a dynamic process, forever changing and moving—not unlike the American musical.

“There’s an oilman known as ‘Tex’
Who is keen to give me checks
And his checks, I fear, mean that sex is here to stay!”
“Always True to You In My Fashion,” *Kiss Me, Kate* (Cole Porter)

CHAPTER V

“WE’VE HAD PLENTY HEIDY-HO:” SEX IN THE AMERICAN MUSICAL

Much of the world’s great music, literature, and art have been created as (displaced) sexuality, although obviously there are differences in how the three fields operate. Susan McClary, a musical cultural critic, says in *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (1991),

Literature and visual art are almost always concerned (at least in part) with the organization of sexuality, the construction of gender, the arousal and channeling of desire. So is music, except that music may perform these functions even more effectively than other media. Since few listeners know how to explain how it creates its effects, music gives the illusion of operating independently of cultural mediation. (53)

There is, as Suzanne Cusick points out, a kind of neighboring quality between sexuality and musicality. Within music as in sexual expression, one selects “an intimacy/pleasure object,” establishes a relationship with that object, and enacts that relationship publicly (Cusick 71).

Some musical works have portrayed literal sexual behavior, through both aegis of the composer and the critics: among them are Wagner’s *Liebestod*,¹¹¹ from *Tristan und Isolde*; and the introduction to *Der Rosenkavalier*. Richard Strauss composed programmatic music to describe sexual coupling between the autobiographical protagonist and his wife in his *Sinfonia Domestica* (1903).

Western theatre also has its origins in (male) sexuality, beginning as it did at Dionysian festivals, complete with wine, song, and celebrations of the phallus. Continuing the cycle, musical theatre itself has its origins in sexual behaviors and desires. A great many histories date the beginnings of the musical comedy from 1866, when a planned production at Niblo's Garden fell through when the theatre caught fire. The theatre manager revived an old melodrama named *The Black Crook* with the aid of a stranded Parisian ballet troupe. The combination created a gold mine which ran nearly 500 performances. The greatest reason for its success was the presence of then-novel ballet dancers in skin-colored tights, giving the impression of the Gaze turned upon bare female legs. Still, the songs were provocative as well, including "You Naughty, Naughty Men:"

When you want a kiss or favor,
You put on your best behavior,
And our looks of kindness savor,
Oh, you naughty, naughty men;
Of love you set us dreaming,
And when with hope we're teeming,
We find you are but scheming,
You naughty, naughty men.

Despite the presence of the male Gaze directed at women on the early musical stage, these actress/dancers still had a great deal more freedom than non-theatre women to reveal their sexuality; they were able to dispense with many of the most confining articles of clothing at a time when other women could not. Corsets and the like were not all of it; during this era, a "respectable" woman wore thirty-seven pounds of clothing when she went into public (Petersen 2).

¹¹¹ McClary believes that "Wagner relies on a conventional association between desire and cadence" in this piece. "He imbues his chromaticism with a mixture of pleasure and pain as it continually defers the longed-for and dreaded telos" ("Schubert" 223).

Sexual behavior in musical theatre is at the same time the most, and least, obvious aspect of the genre. Many people are aware that sexuality is one aspect, yet a vast majority feel musicals avoid the issue; the genre is perceived as a conservative tradition that rarely deals with matters sexual. Those that do are seen as reinforcing heteronormative sexual behavior, particularly with the male as central and dominant.

Since Freud, theoreticians have expanded the definitions of sexual behavior to include many nonhegemonic behaviors. Kathleen McKinney and Susan Sprecher define sex as the “erotic arousal and genital responses resulting from following the shared social scripts of that society,” and sexual scripts as “the with whom, where, how, and why the erotic arousal and genital responses may occur” (2). Note that this definition covers a wide variety of behaviors constructing sexuality, and therefore only society dictates that it is the male who pursues and missionizes his female partner. This chapter will examine the disruption of that pattern.

In “Mating, the Family, and Marriage: A Sociological View” (1991), sociologist Ronald Fletcher posits that “family” is a part of all human societies, and that there has been a long tradition of the belief that “no matter how culturally complex and various (in various societies) the institution of marriage becomes, it is primarily rooted in the biological nature of mating, and this is primarily rooted in family” (19). In other words, sexuality and societally accepted views of it all spring from custom, which in turn regulates it (Fletcher 115-116). In his view, we cannot separate sex and marriage, or as another sociologist writing in the same year terms it, “mating and marriage;” Edmund Leach does believe they are separate, but he agrees that tradition has not thought of them as such.

Western music and (theatrical) literature and music have both long been assumed to follow the male sexual response pattern; sexual imagery is part of the traditional reception accorded such works. Note the imagery in Joseph Horowitz' description of Van Cliburn's pianistic talent.

[The piece] heaves upward in great concentrated waves, slowing the pace, weighting the climaxes. The first-movement cadenza, . . . an upheaval of expanding force and sonority, builds with utter sureness; Cliburn simply lets it come. The tidal altitude and breadth of its crest are dizzying. The long descent is equally thorough; to begin the coda, the first theme returns dazed and spent. (Horowitz 30)¹¹²

It is dangerous, of course, to assume that this correlation between traditional structure and male sexual pattern must be anything more than that, but musical desire does mirror other types of desire. And there is a great deal of desire inherent within Western music: desire for (harmonic) resolution, desire for (harmonic) stability, desire for the sounds produced. "In Western culture, music *itself* is always in danger of being regarded as the feminine Other that circumvents reason and arouses desire" (McClary 79).¹¹³ On the other hand, up through the early modern era, "beauty in music was commonly described as having the effect of 'ravishing' the sense or the soul" (Brett 11). In other words, the feminine music pursues the (male) hearer and takes the active role in seducing *him*.¹¹⁴

¹¹² It is conceivable that the "traditional" Broadway musical song is closer to the female sexual pattern, with their alternating repetition of verse/chorus, verse/chorus, and so on, each with its own pull forward, its own climax, and its own release. While climaxes within this music do tend to occur toward the end, there are a great many repetitions of the pattern in countless songs.

¹¹³ See Chapter 6 for more discussion of this point.

¹¹⁴ Texted music is easier to discuss within this context, of course, but there is always the danger that, as McClary mentions, the discussion develops the lyric alone. Musical theatre emphasizes its lyrics, and it would be ridiculous to ignore the lyrics attached to these musicals, but it is also possible to discuss the accompanying music by and of itself.

Dance, which has been so prominent in musical theatre, is a short addendum to this discussion.¹¹⁵ Dance, as much as music, creates and investigates desire: desire for agility and liveness, desire for the body of the dancer, and desire for transcendence.

Often physical re-enactments of sexual partnering can take place through dance,

when two bodies communicate perfectly (and look perfectly and beautifully matched). Absentmindedly, tightly embraced, their torsos tilt toward each other in a delicate balance, their legs tracing sinuous paths . . . muscles fully alert to the doing and undoing of mutually provoked entanglements. (Savigliano 104)

In fact, “popular music and dance . . . overflow with licentiousness and banality. . . .

[T]hey persistently stretch and strain towards ecstasy and transcendence” (Washbaugh 1).

Musical theatre emphasizes the body above and beyond most non-musical work.

Dancers strain to leave gravity, and singers often stand still, almost forcing the Gaze onto themselves. Simultaneously, what is being sung or danced—and therefore thrust out of the body toward the audience—is interiority, desire, and sexuality.

Sexuality in the Early Twentieth Century

There have been two major models of non-heteronormative, non-marital sexual behavior research in the West: the “sin model” and the “sickness model,” the latter of which began to supplant the former by the mid-nineteenth century. It is only by the last few decades of the twentieth century that the “sickness model” has also come under attack (Bullough and Bullough 9). A great deal of the trouble has come about because

Western culture, at least since the advent of Christianity, has been looked upon as a sex-negative culture. Sexuality attitudes have been regarded with suspicion if not hostility. . . . The key to this Western hostility to sex lies in Greek dualistic thought. . . . Sex was bad because sexual activity

¹¹⁵ Since the end of the Golden Era, dance has begun to feature less prominently. Some musicals, such as *Sunday in the Park With George* (1984) dispense with it entirely.

represented the assertion of the bodily needs over the spiritual. (Bullough and Bullough 11).

Freud told the world that sexuality needed expression and attempts to contain it were doomed. He also told the world in 1905 that women were capable of orgasm, and that there were two types of female sexual fulfillment; the “mature” one was produced only with penetration (Petersen 33). Havelock Ellis published *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* during that same year, in which he challenged “the prevailing notion of women’s lack of sexuality, claiming that some women were as filled with desire as men, as capable of orgasm” (Petersen 32).

While resistance to the ideas of Freud (and others) was perhaps inevitable, by the 1920s America did see a new emphasis on sexual pleasure. Of course, this was still within the realms of marriage, since the only “appropriate manner of achieving it was through marriage” (Ericksen and Steffen 37). It was during this time that female sexuality and sexual pleasure began receiving key attention as natural and normal (Ericksen and Steffen Chapter 3).

By 1938, the year *Leave It To Me!* opened, studies on sex and sexual behavior were common, and one study of college students suggested that sex was problematic because

‘an intense love relationship tends to be more disturbing than tranquilizing,’ . . . [but] was not always to be discouraged. . . . Giving in to desire was wrong only in the pragmatic sense that love and work might not be compatible. This was particularly true of women, since for them premarital sex carried a heavy burden of secrecy. (Ericksen and Steffen 69)

Advice manuals for young people such as Roy Dickerson’s *So Youth May Know* (1930) not only suggested avoiding any prolonged physical contact but “neglected to include the

clitoris in the diagram of the female sex organs that appears in the appendix, lest women discover for themselves that sex could be pleasureable” (Petersen 133). 1931 also saw the publication of Robert Dickinson and Lura Beam’s *A Thousand Marriages: A Medical Study of Sex Adjustment*, which did explain that women could have orgasms, but only after childbirth, and only while married.

Musical theatre has always had its share of sexually transgressive characters, but generally speaking they were the secondary ones, with characters such as Irene (*Irene*, 1919) and Sally (*Sally*, 1920) remaining properly virginal until after the final curtain. By the 1930s, non-marital sexual behavior, while not necessarily represented onstage by every character, has a greater hold on their lives than their predecessors, and the works demonstrate a remarkably larger knowledge of it than do their stage predecessors. Certainly the women began to subvert the male primacy within sexual encounters.

“Fun for Everybody:” *Leave It To Me!* and the Sexuality of Politics

Leave It To Me! was a remarkable musical on many levels. Not only did it have a Cole Porter score, but it was the first collaboration between Porter and Samuel and Bella Spewack; the trio would later go on to create *Kiss Me Kate* (1948). *Leave It To Me!* also boasted a cast which would in later years elevate it to near-legendary status. Gene Kelly made his debut as a chorus boy; a portion of his duties consisted of dancing with Mary Martin, herself making her debut with “My Heart Belongs to Daddy,” a song which shot her to instant stardom. The musical marked yet another pairing of William Gaxton and Victor Moore, who were almost inextricably twinned after their initial coupling in *Of Thee I Sing* (1931), the first musical to win a Pulitzer Prize. *Leave It To Me!*’s ingenue

was Tamara, a one-named sensation who had originally introduced Jerome Kern's "Smoke Gets In Your Eyes," in 1933's *Roberta*. Finally, the work marked the "legitimate" musical stage debut of one of vaudeville's most enduring stars, Sophie Tucker, "the last of the red-hot mammas."

Cole Porter is known for his sophisticated lyrics laced with large dollops of innuendo. It is the cleverness of this innuendo, in fact, that produces the fun. The audience knows what is being alluded to, but has to work a bit to get in on the enjoyment. This holds true throughout his entire career, beginning with "You've got what Adam craved when he with love for Eve was tortured / She only had an apple tree, but you, you've got an orchard" ("You've Got That Thing" from *Fifty Million Frenchmen*, 1929). By the 1950s, Porter was listing the women the god Mercury had known in *Out of This World*; said list includes Pandora, who "let me open her box."

Porter's music is sexual, too, even without lyrics attached. He often utilized South American dance tempos in his songs, including rhythms from tangos, sambas, rhumbas, and—perhaps most famously—the beguine. The exotic, propulsive rhythms of these dances, as well as Porter's famous chromaticism,¹¹⁶ add up to a strongly sensual, sexual style of composition, even without the addition of his lyrics.

Leave It To Me! opened on November 9, 1938. Said by many critics to be based on the Spewacks' earlier play, *Clear All Wires* (1932), it in fact only uses the original play as a base from which to springboard to an entirely new story. The musical concerns a young reporter named Buckley Thomas, who is in love with his publisher's girlfriend,

¹¹⁶ Chromaticism by itself is simply a move away from the most related notes within a musical key. When added to specific rhythmic styles, it can become a powerful presenter of exoticism, as well as sensuousness. Examples abound, including Carmen's famous "Habanera," the opening line of which is a descending chromatic melodic line.

Dolly Winslow. Thomas is sent to Russia to engineer the downfall of newly-appointed ambassador Alonzo P. Goodhue, primarily because the publisher is angry *he* was not appointed. When Thomas meets Goodhue, he finds that the appointment was entirely due to Mrs. Goodhue's political contributions and machinations; the ambassador himself wishes to go back home to Kansas and play horseshoes. Thomas takes a liking to Goodhue and attempt to aid in his being recalled. Nothing works. When the ambassador kicks another diplomat in the stomach, the world cheers as the man turns out to be a Nazi. When he pretends to attempt an assassination of a Russian prince, Goodhue inadvertently wounds a real assassin attempting to kill that same prince. Finally, Thomas realizes that the only thing that will get the naïve Goodhue recalled is to let the man be himself. His announcement of his plans for Europe include the complete cessation of war and an eventual "United States of Europe;" the Goodhues are immediately brought back to America. Meanwhile, Thomas is fired by his publisher, who has discovered the reporter's earlier dalliance with Dolly, but Goodhue, a millionaire, buys the newspaper and hires Thomas as the executive editor. Along the way, Dolly and Thomas have realized they no longer love each other, but Thomas concludes the musical in a renewed relationship with a previous girlfriend, Colette.

While the Hays Office kept a stranglehold on Hollywood's discussions of sexuality, the New York stage had fewer difficulties. *Leave It To Me!*'s entire libretto and score discuss sexual behavior, with music, book and lyrics all performing their missions deftly. Everyone eventually gets into the act, even the characters seen as naïve and romantic.

While the play opens in New York, it quickly moves first to Paris and then Moscow. All three cities are perceived as cosmopolitan and sophisticated, with Paris' reputation as worldly and sensual contributing to the overall representation. The choral number that opens the second scene, in a Paris train station, establishes the atmosphere for even the non-named characters within *Leave It To Me!*. The "Five Boys" sing to the "Five Girls" as the women depart: "Farewell, my sweetheart, / Don't fail to write. / I'm going to miss you / More and more ev'ry night" (18). Meanwhile, the women sing "Goodbye, my lover" as they discuss various lost items. The Fourth Girl sings "I lost my trav'lers checks / Only this afternoon," while the Fifth answers with "I've still got my / Virginity (pronounced to rhyme with my) / But I'm hoping to lose it soon" (18).

Colette, the romantic female lead, has had a relationship with Thomas previously and breaks off one with her current boyfriend to start up with Thomas again. Her song, "From Now On," is her response to his desire to be faithful. He bemoans the fact that "Ever since I saw you in the Embassy my hand has lost its cunning. I'm thinking pure thoughts. . . ." He feels that it is he who has changed, though she is sure this is impossible (51): "I can't b'lieve a word you say, boy, / For you see / You were born to be / Merely a play-boy. / So put love back on the shelf dear, / Be your charming self / From now on" (55).

In what is certainly a bow to tradition, the lion's share of naughtiness and innuendo belong to the soubrette. Dolly made a star of her pottrayer, Mary Martin, who maintained throughout her life that she was unaware of the role's more licentious qualities. Many people tell of the full-throated shout of laughter that greeted Dolly's line to Thomas as she enters the newspaper office: "I'd like to renew my subscription" (13).

The response surprised Martin so much that she stopped and looked around, wondering who could be so funny (Martin 70); that the character has brought sex into the newspaper office obviously escaped the actress. During the ensuing discussion, Dolly discusses surrendering her current boyfriend, the publisher J.H. Brody, in favor of Thomas. It is not easy for her: “After all, I gave up a lovely friendship with a Belgian for J.H. . . . And I stopped corresponding with a boy in Harvard—. . . . We were saving stamps together” (13). Later, she bursts into Goodhue’s room in Russia to say goodbye: “I have to go back to J.H. eventually. Now don’t act silly about it. You remember that Belgian Count? He made an awful fuss. He even sent his father up. And what a time I had with the father!” (40). Finally, much as she brings sex as a commodity with her upon her entrance, she takes it with her when she leaves. She is once again back with J.H., who has just learned that Thomas took her abroad, and who has fired the reporter. Brody uses this as a warning for his girlfriend, saying, “Come along, Dolly. Let this be a lesson to you.” Dolly responds with a sigh. “Oh, it is . . . it is . . . I’m through with sex” (68).

Dolly sings two songs in *Leave It To Me!*,¹¹⁷ both are which are fully concerned with sexual matters. The first is less well-known, but quite explicit; it is “When All’s Said and Done,” sung by Thomas and Dolly as their affair ends. “When all’s said and done / We’ve had plenty heidy-ho” (41). It ends with the couplet, “How often we meant to sup together, / But ended by waking up together” (43).

Dolly’s most famous song is the most celebrated of the entire score, “My Heart Belongs to Daddy.” It is regarding this song that Martin remained most ingenious, maintaining until her death that she never understood most of the lyric.

¹¹⁷ She originally had three, but the first was Arditi’s operetta-like aria “*Il Bacio*,” which the young Martin had used as an audition piece; the song was removed on the road (See Martin page 69 and following).

When I first sang ‘Daddy,’ it never entered my mind that this was a risqué song. It entered a lot of other people’s minds, though, or I would never have got the part. Right in the middle of rehearsals for a show called *Leave It To Me*, June Knight, the girl who was supposed to sing ‘Daddy,’ ran off and married a Texas oilman. He didn’t want her to sing such suggestive lyrics, so he put his husbandly foot down. June left the show. That’s how I found myself onstage, hayseeds and all, doing a striptease before I had ever heard the expression. (Martin 69)

The legendary striptease accompanying the song was apparently unplanned, as well.

While Dolly’s lifts worked perfectly well in rehearsal clothes, the fur clothing she wore during the number—the scene is set in Siberia—kept her slipping out of the chorus boys’ hands.

Bob Alton [the choreographer] had the most delicious, wicked wit. He kept saying, ‘Well, *that* will have to come off . . .’ and he conceived the striptease. In the final production, there we all were, Dolly Winslow in freezing Siberia, dancing up a storm to hot rhumba, singing her heart out to six mute Eskimos, and taking things off. (Martin 77)

Porter himself was convinced that Martin “never had any idea bout the many meanings of ‘My Heart Belongs to Daddy.’ But then, neither did the radio networks at first. They played it for quite a while before they discovered that some of the lines to ‘Daddy’ weren’t quite proper” (qtd in McBrien 221).

There are therefore two transgressive elements to the sexuality portrayed in this song. While burlesque houses might produce stripteases, the legitimate musical theatre rarely did, and would at least provide some flimsy excuse for the (always) female’s loss of clothing. In this case, the creators actively work against that tradition, placing the woman losing her clothing in the middle of Siberia and thereby calling attention to arbitrariness of stripping, both within the context of the musical and generally. The other reason is that Porter had nearly constant battles with media censors all his life; his statement that the radio stations originally noticed nothing inappropriate with the song

simply supports the basis of this chapter. How could such popular escapist entertainment have anything to say about sex?

The lyric to Dolly's song is full of the allusive wordplay that was a major Porter trademark. While the song is well-known, it is worthwhile to quote a few lines.

If I invite
A boy, some night
To dine on my fine finnan haddie,
I just adore his asking for more,
But my heart belongs to Daddy. . . .
Though other dames
At football games
May long for a strong undergraddy,
I never dream of making the team
'Cause my heart belongs to Daddy. (58-59).

The music supporting this lyric contains Porter's customary (but always surprising) slippages between major and minor modes, with its verse in C major and the chorus in the parallel minor. It is a rhumba, a dance with a pulsating beat that is already exotic (and erotic) in nature. The fact that a striptease accompanies such a number simply emphasizes the sexuality already implicit within the melody (and explicit within the lyric). The music is artfully constructed to support its attendant words.

Refrain (*slow Rhumba tempo*)

While tear - ing off_ A game of golf_ I may make a play for the

cad-dy; But when I do_ I don't fol-low through 'Cause my heart be-longs to Dad-dy.

Fm6 G7 Fm A7 Cm G7 Cm

Example 5.1: First Verse of “My Heart Belongs to Daddy.”

The first eight notes are syncopated, but stay within the expected rhumba pattern while remaining fully diatonic. When Dolly mentions that “I may make a play for the caddy,” the repeated triplets interrupt the rhythmic structure that has been established. While Dolly’s outside relationships seem to occur with some frequency—in both song and musical—the idea of moving to a new relationship is a rhythmic (and lyric) interruption of her current one.

Note that the next line, “But when I do, I don’t follow through,” contains the word “when,” not “if.” And just as this reflects that the singer experiments with outside relationships but always returns home in the end, so too does the accompanying music. This phrase contains the high note of the section, and the segment is highly chromatic, as well, with two prominent tones outside the key signatures, the F# and the B-natural. “‘Cause my heart belongs to Daddy” not only returns the singer to her beloved lyrically, but musically as well: the notes are completely diatonic once more. The repeated notes

on “heart belongs” emphasize the lyric, with a final move back to the tonic note to show she is home. The song moves unexpectedly upward to considerably higher pitches at the song’s bridge, as she repeats and emphasizes that “yes, my heart belongs to Daddy,” and then without warning returns to the C-major mode of the verse as she warns the men around her, with a final shift back to the minor as she finishes back with Daddy, “that my heart belongs to Daddy, ‘Cause my Daddy, he treats it so well.”

The image displays three systems of musical notation for the bridge of the song "My Heart Belongs to Daddy." Each system consists of a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment (grand staff with treble and bass clefs). The key signature is B-flat major (two flats), and the time signature is common time (C). The lyrics are written below the vocal line.

System 1:

heart be-longs to Dad-dy, Da-da, da-da-da, da-da-da-ad! So I

System 2:

want to warn you, lad-die, Tho' I know you're per-fect-ly swell, That my

System 3:

heart belongs to Dad-dy, 'Cause my Dad-dy, he treats it so well.

The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note bass line in the left hand and a more complex melody in the right hand, often using triplets and sixteenth notes. The vocal line includes various ornaments, such as grace notes and triplets, particularly in the "Da-da" section.

Figure 5.2: Bridge of “My Heart Belongs to Daddy.”

The cantillated syllables as she draws out her “Da-da, da-da-da, da-da-da-dad!” have come in for much discussion over the years. In his autobiography, Richard Rodgers relates a conversation with Porter wherein Porter confided his secret to writing hit songs: “I’ll write Jewish tunes.” Rodgers laughed, but ceased when he found Porter to be serious. Rodgers realized later that songs such as the one under discussion or “Begin the Beguine,” (both in minor keys) “are unmistakably eastern Mediterranean” (Rodgers 156). Because of that story in particular, and because this particular syllabic emphasis does bear some similarity to that practiced within the more traditional-sounding Jewish music, the inference has been drawn that “Daddy” was obviously a rich Jew, and charges of antisemitism were leveled at Porter. There are two problems with this idea. The first is that the audience has already learned who “Daddy” is—J.H. Brody—and no other textual hints are given that he might be Jewish. Secondly, Stephen Citron says that the songs mentioned by Rodgers remind him more of the “ambivalent French chansons around Pigalle than true Yiddish music. (None of Cole’s tunes has the interval of a step-and-a-half, the augmented second, so much a trademark of Hebraic or Jewish song.)” (Citron *Sophisticates* 102).¹¹⁸

Interestingly, it is the older married couple who bring sex into the rest of the equation, particularly Mrs. Goodhue.¹¹⁹ As mentioned above, “Her Excellency,” as the Ambassador’s wife styles herself throughout the play, was portrayed by Sophie Tucker. Tucker achieved her initial celebrity in vaudeville, where she began as a “coon shouter”

¹¹⁸ To my ear, it simply elongates the word and fondles it musically, making it a sexually charged moment within the song. Much the same thing happens during the later Sondheim song “I Never Do Anything Twice” from the film *The Seven-Per-Cent Solution* (sic) (1976). Perhaps not coincidentally, the Sondheim song is also in a minor key and contains a similar-sounding “uh-uh” extended over several notes and syllables. It indicates that the singer has seen even more than she is discussing.

¹¹⁹ Porter spent much of his career writing of the quest for novelty; it can be extrapolated that marriage would be the death of this sort of sexual novelty.

in blackface makeup.¹²⁰ She eventually became known for her “naughty” songs, such as “I May Be Getting Older Every Day (But Getting Younger Every Night),” and “Who Paid the Rent for Mrs. Rip Van Winkle (When Rip Van Winkle Went Away)?” She credited herself with introducing the Shimmy, a sexy dance at the time, during her vaudeville act (Slide 508-513). The gusto with which she performed, as well as her ability to continue singing these sexual songs after she had gained a great deal of weight, conspired to let her audiences know why she was identified as the “Last of the Red-Hot Mammas.” Hence, her casting in this show, where she was given songs and dialogue that matched her various performance styles perfectly, was a small masterpiece of early postmodern reflexivity. The audiences were obviously never intended to forget that “Her Excellency” was Sophie Tucker.

Like Dolly, Mrs. Goodhue brings with her the idea of sex, although in her case it is the curtailing of it. She is first seen in Paris, where she enters and “looks about as if missing something,” calling for her daughters. When they reply from offstage, she shouts “Keep away from that poster!” (20), obviously moving them away from something she finds risqué. When the reporters ask the group to pose for a family portrait and wonder where her husband is, she responds, “Is he necessary?” (20). The comment not only places Goodhue as a henpecked husband, but disrupts the traditional idea of the father’s place within the biological picture.

Tucker’s three songs fit perfectly within the range of styles she was using in her vaudeville acts. Her last song, “Tomorrow,” in which she leads the chorus, is a revival

¹²⁰ So called because this group, primarily women, would specialize in ragtime and jazz, associated with, and often composed by, African-Americans.

type of song,¹²¹ letting the “shouter” in her voice predominate. Her first, “I’m Taking the Steps to Russia,” is sung as a reply to the question of why she is traveling to Russia with a group of dancers. The music is jazzy and syncopated. Furthermore, the song’s lyric contains a list of the sexy dances and their presumed effects on the Russians. “I’m showing ‘em how to dance, / I’m starting the shag in Moscow, / I’m putting ants in their pants” (21). This song, taken with the audience’s knowledge of the singer’s career, refers back to Tucker’s introduction of the Shimmy and the types of songs she has previously sung.

It is her second number that is the most concerned with sex, while continuing Her Excellency’s movement *away* from sex. “Most Gentlemen Don’t Like Love” is a mother’s advice to her five nearly-grown daughters, warning them of the dangers of men. However, it contains two lyric lines during the music bridge that tell the audience a great deal about the singer’s past.

As Madame Sappho in some sonnet said
‘A slap and a tickle
Is all that the fickle
Male
Ever has in his head,’ . . .
So just remember when you get that glance,
A romp and a quickie
Is all little Dickie
Means when he mentions romance. (30).

She continually repeats throughout that “I know what I’m talking of.” This song is advice from someone who has been there. And while the ritualistic aspects of this song are far removed from the serious vein of the following two works, there is still a ritual facet to it, as of a mother passing along the facts of life to her daughters.

¹²¹ A more famous example might be “Blow, Gabriel, Blow” from *Anything Goes* (1934).

The music for this song only serves to highlight the explicit sexuality within the lyric. During the verse, the music stays extremely diatonic and four-square, with no major syncopation:

The image shows a musical score for the first lines of the song "Most Gentlemen Don't Like Love." It consists of two systems of music, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The first system begins with a piano (*p*) and *a tempo* marking. The lyrics are: "When Mum-my in her six-teenth year Was dream-ing of ro-mance a lot, She". The second system continues the lyrics: "thought that she was Guin-e-ver-e And ev-'ry boy Sir Lanc-e-lot. But". Above the second system, the chords C, G7, C, F#8, G7, C are indicated. The word "Più" is written above the final measure of the second system. The music is written in a diatonic, four-square style.

Figure 5.3: First lines of “Most Gentlemen Don’t Like Love.”

As she arrives in the present with the next line, the line becomes increasingly more chromatic as the melody moves to G-major and thereby adds an increasingly important F# to the mix; there are other chromatic additions, however, and by the chorus, chromaticism and syncopation rule the day.

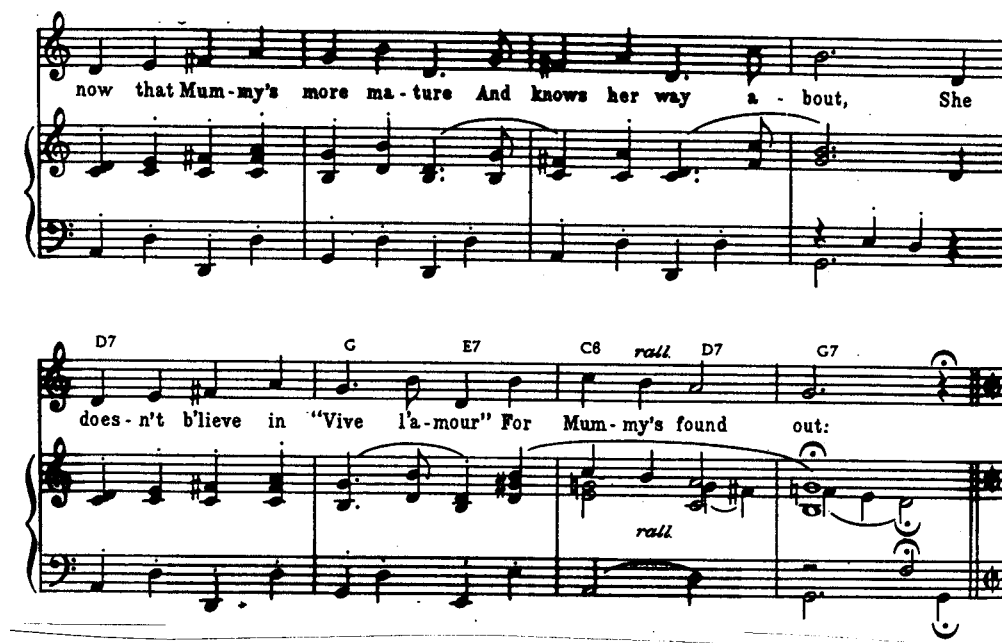


Figure 5.4: Second half of Introduction to “Most Gentlemen Don’t Like Love.”

Ambassador Goodhue originally only discusses sex in response to his wife.

When she asks him “Why haven’t I got nine children like the Kennedys?,” he responds (though only after she has left) with “I’m tired.” The positive aspects of sex appear when he reminisces about Topeka; he mentions the back room of the pool hall “where they all / Tell the darnedest stories!” (55). These dirty jokes provide an affirming perspective on sexuality, something not found in his wife’s domain.

In fact, when Goodhue takes the lead in discussions of sexuality, he is “punished” by being sent home. Ironically, he has decided to work hard and do a good job by this point. As such, he proposes a sizeable plan to end war. The third plank in his platform is that armies will continue to invade other countries; however, any occupied nations will simply turn around and inhabit the first invading country. No shots will be fired, yet each will be happy.

That brings me to the most important plank: Plank Four—Sex! . . . The French soldiers will live in German houses. The German soldiers will live in French houses. And what are the results? (Takes glasses off and smiles) Fun for everybody. (Continues reading) At the end of one year, the soldiers will be homesick. . . . [T]he Armies march back. (Business of marching) The result of a year’s occupation will bring about a whole generation, not of Germans, not of Frenchmen, but Franco-Germans . . . Now . . . Twenty years pass . . . The Franco-German Army marches into Russia . . . We have a generation of Franco-German-Russians . . . Gentlemen, ‘ere long, there will be no nations. We will have the United States of Europe. (61-62).

Of course, he is immediately recalled home upon this presentation. The plan has a rather conspicuous connection to the disruption of the supremacy of male sexuality. The model of male sexuality could be considered invasive, much like the armies mentioned in Goodhue’s plan. But overturning this would be a more “female” kind of reciprocity, as evidenced by the welcoming populations of the invaded countries.

While it is obviously foolish to assume that sexuality within music *must* Freudianly mirror the male sexual pattern, it does seem worth approaching at least one song through that model. “Get Out of Town,” Colette’s solo in *Leave It To Me!*, is a very good example. Like much of Porter’s music, there is an exotic pulse that flows through the song: repeated and insistent notes, tones that are strikingly out of the song’s key,¹²² rhythmic surprises, and extraordinary amounts of chromaticism.



Figure 5.5: Melodic shape of “Get Out of Town.”

¹²² Another song from the musical, “Far Away,” not only moves back and forth between F minor and E-flat major, but the melodic line features a prominent and repeated tritone, an interval rarely used in popular music. The score to *West Side Story*, written twenty years later, would feature extended use of the interval.

The entire musical is like this: colorful, surprising, and great fun. No summation could work any better than Robert Benchley's contemporary review of the musical: Porter's "lyrics are in his best, which means his most you-know-what vein" (qtd in Citron *Sophisticates* 167). And while naughtiness may be the province of a great many musicals of the time, giving it into the hands of the women to pursue and deal with as they see fit is quite transgressive at a time when women's sexuality was only just beginning to be discussed at all. Dolly feels quite free to do whatever she wants with whomever she wishes, and weakens the sexual dominance of men through her actions.

The Sexual Politics of World War II

Sex was brought to the surface of Americans' lives during World War II. The "baby boom" actually arrived in waves. The first was during 1941 and 1942, as men became fathers in order to be exempted from military duty. So the war began with sexuality being expressed, even before anyone went "over there." As men left, they disappeared from towns across America, leaving women to compete for those who were left. Male soldiers in the Pacific found sex where they could, often with the complicity of their superiors, and sometimes with their aid (Petersen 160-164). Bob Hope said that he learned during his foreign USO tours that "the enemies were boredom, mud, officers and abstinence [from sex]" (qtd. in Petersen 174). It was the astonishing rise of sexually transmitted diseases during this period that gave rise to the use of penicillin, as a means of treating them. After the war, there was seemingly a return to "normalcy."

But normalcy was not forthcoming. The divorce rate doubled between 1940 and 1946. Women who had achieved sexual and personal freedoms during the war were

reluctant to go back (Petersen 185-187). In 1948, the year before *South Pacific* opened in New York, a study was released that speculated that women's sexual interest in men resulted not only from love but also from a man's emotional commitment to her. Ericksen and Steffen summarize this conclusion as "in the postwar world of the 1950s his message was unmistakable," and stamped indelibly upon the world of social science the "double standard." (69-71). The same year, Alfred Kinsey released his study, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (the companion volume, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* would be released in 1953, shortly before the *South Pacific* closed). Even as the latter was published, other sociologists from the era ignored Kinsey's findings that the patterns of female sexual response apparently differed little from that of men (Weiss 147). In fact, it would not be until the 1960s, with the publication of Masters and Johnson's *Human Sexual Response* (1966) that the superfluosity of men for female orgasm was put into plain language.

Despite burgeoning sexual knowledge and license, it was still daring for *South Pacific* to depict the sexuality of its characters as freely as it did. In 1948, Ingrid Bergman was blacklisted by Hollywood for her affair with Robert Rossellini; it would be 1956 before she would make another film there. The House Un-American Activities Committee and J. Edgar Hoover began utilizing knowledge of sexual behavior as a weapon against those who did not conform, sexually or politically. Yet in 1949, a musical opened which proclaimed as part of its agenda that sexual behavior between men and women was part of the natural order of things, and that it did not always happen within the confines of marital union.

“Get a Load of Honey Bun Tonight:” *South Pacific* and the Gaze

The origin of *South Pacific* as a musical was James Michener’s bestseller, *Tales of the South Pacific*, printed in 1947. Michener’s book, his first published work, was based on his own wartime experiences; the work would go on to win a Pulitzer Prize for fiction the year it appeared. Various stories abound concerning the rights to the property as a musical dramatization, with a tug of war between Joshua Logan (who collaborated on the musical’s book with Hammerstein and also directed) and Rodgers and Hammerstein; the conflict would destroy the chance of any future collaborations between the three. The musical opened April 7, 1949 and ran for over five years, or 1,925 performances. It became the longest-running musical of the decade and still remains on the list of the top ten. It won the second Pulitzer Prize ever awarded a musical, in 1950.¹²³ The original cast album for the work aided in the trend of the then-new 33 1/3 LP, selling a million copies and holding the number one position on the charts for well over a year. Even the sheet music sold two million copies. After the stage version closed, Twentieth Century Fox bought the rights to the film version which, although not as respected as the stage version, received three Academy Award nominations, and produced a soundtrack album that once again put the score in the top ten on the charts for well over a year.¹²⁴

South Pacific concerns army nurse Nellie Forbush, from Little Rock Arkansas, who is stationed in the Pacific during World War II. She meets the handsome, middle-aged French planter Emile de Becque and the two fall in love. When she discovers that

¹²³ The first was won by 1931’s *Of Thee I Sing*.

¹²⁴ The musical was also responsible for setting a fashion trend: Mary Martin’s onstage hair washing during the song “I’m Gonna Wash That Man Right Out-A My Hair” proved such a sensation that not only

he has two children by a Polynesian mistress (now dead), she calls off the engagement. Meanwhile, the young Lieutenant Cable has met a Tonkin peddler, Bloody Mary, who introduces him to her young daughter, Liat, on the island of Bali Ha'i. When Cable realizes he cannot bring himself to marry the non-white Liat, he volunteers for a dangerous mission on another island; de Becque, despondent over Nellie's rejection, accompanies him. Cable dies during the mission, and when Nellie realizes that de Becque might die as well, she overcomes her difficulties with his past. He returns to find her singing with his children.

As was so often the case with Rodgers and Hammerstein, the so-called "rules" were apparently made to be broken. The secondary story within a musical traditionally calls for comic relief; *South Pacific*'s secondary love story ends tragically. The pair also cast Ezio Pinza as Emile de Becque. He would be the first opera star they cast in their works, and the only operatic male they would ever use.¹²⁵ They also retained their message about racial tolerance and acceptance, "You've Got to Be Carefully Taught," despite the naysayers' complaints that it was too controversial" (Fordin 270-271).

It was this song, in fact, that summed up the creators' attitude toward the work. Both had written musicals separately that had tackled the issue of race and prejudice (Rodgers in *Babes in Arms* [1937] and Hammerstein in *Show Boat* [1927]), but this was their first major confrontation of the topic as a team. *Carousel* (1945) and *Allegro* both dealt with issues of class and tolerance, but were non-ethnic; interestingly, the only musical the pair had written that dealt with issues of ethnic Othering was also the one that

did women begin cutting their hair as short as hers, but shampoo companies began promoting daily use of their products, with Martin's onstage example as their promotional position.

¹²⁵ *Allegro* (1947) had an opera singer in the much smaller role of Joe's mother; she had also retired from the operatic stage before her work on the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical. Pinza was in his prime.

dealt most openly with sexual issues: *Oklahoma!* (1943). Ethnicity was tackled peripherally with the character of Ali Hakim (see Chapter 3) and sexuality addressed with the character of Ado Annie. However, neither issue is explored very much, and despite the presence of “I’m Just a Girl Who Cain’t Say No,” it is still possible for high schools across America to present Annie as simply an outrageous flirt with no textual revision.

South Pacific, on the other hand, is as up front in its presentation(s) of sexuality as it is in its message of racial harmony, despite the conservative bent of both its lyricist and composer. Directly before *South Pacific*, Joshua Logan invited Rodgers and Hammerstein to produce with him a non-musical play called *John Loves Mary*. Logan recalled finding the solution to a problem in Act II; the answer would be to have the male lead return after the female lead’s parents were gone, kiss her and “take her off into the bedroom. Oscar rose with a purple face and said, ‘Anyone who would make a suggestion like *that* is a *cad!*’” (Logan 235). Hammerstein would go on, during the composition of *Pipe Dream* (1955), to sanitize Steinbeck’s *Cannery Row* characters to the point where many in the audience were never sure if the ingénue was, in fact, a prostitute or not. Rodgers was also conservative; according to Cy Feuer, Rodgers was just as uncomfortable with the prostitution as Hammerstein, and just as responsible for cleaning the characters up. However, the very fecundity of *South Pacific*’s setting and images assumes a sensuality that tends to be missing from the team’s other works.

Logan was called in as co-author of the book when Hammerstein despaired of getting the military details right. It was Logan’s idea to use the story “Fo’ Dolla” from Michener’s book, and Hammerstein’s to draw on “Our Heroine,” but it was Hammerstein who began the work by combining the two stories (Logan Chapter 13). Logan directed,

and said of his work that “*South Pacific* has added to my reputation as the nudity king of Broadway,” a reputation that began with *Mr. Roberts* and the idea that something onstage should “interest the women.” However, Logan discovered over the years that males identified with the male nudity of the two works, believing that “I used to look like that. They’re men. They’re one of us.” After recognizing this fact, Logan “used nudity whenever it was appropriate. The most fortunate use of it came with *South Pacific*” (Logan 297).

Theatre concentrates the viewer’s attention on the body of the actor, and musical theatre even more so. As early as 1906, George Fuchs discussed dance and acting as the same thing, and in sexual terms: “rhythmical movement of the human body in space, caused by the creative impulse to represent an emotion by the expressive means of one’s body, and with the intention of pleurably releasing this inner drive by setting other people in the same or similar rhythmical vibrations” (qtd in Fischer-Lichte 63); this is also true of singing. Audience members are moved by the same emotions expressed by a dancer/singer/actor’s body. More often than not, a singer moves far less than a dancer onstage, forcing viewers to focus completely on the body itself, rather than movements that might be made. “The body onstage is the body of the actor and not the body of the fictional character. The actor’s body merely functions as a sign pointing to the body of the dramatic character” (Fischer-Lichte 293). In either case, the spectator turns a Gaze upon these onstage persons that is more intense than that turned on the general populace. The semi-naked bodies onstage in *South Pacific*—male Seabees, nurses in shorts and bras, and Liat—all point in the direction expressed by Fischer-Lichte, with a focus on the naked body that creates the kind of desire many spectators will associate with sexual

desire. “There Is Nothing Like A Dame,” for example, a song about the singers’ desire, was staged with the men pacing restlessly, their shirts off. “Lead with your crotch!,” was the advice Logan gave them (Logan 238). Again, with the Gaze firmly directed at the bodies of the men in the cast, it seems as if power was taken out of its conventional configuration once again and given to the women in the audience. In fact, Logan intentionally wanted to “interest the women” with this staging.

The song itself contains a couple of notable musical features that, if not precisely as sensual in nature as in the music of Cole Porter, are indicative of the sexual state of the sailors’ mind. And while I have already looked at Porter melodic line from the perspective of the male sexual response, this number (written by men, staged by men, performed by men) contains two strong moments in that area. As is often Rodger’s wont, the melody of the verse is built on an ascending scale. Each successive singer takes the line higher.



Figure 5.6: Opening verse of “There Is Nothin’ Like A Dame.”

Billis takes the verse into the chorus each time, with a line sung to numerous repeated notes that the score suggests are sung “like a recit” (recitative). But the repeated note,

insistent, drumming, and on a tone that is a step below its resolution obtains its interest from the growing urgency that it be resolved.¹²⁶

Another of the signs “pointing to the body of the dramatic character” in *South Pacific* is that of the sexualized, gazed-upon body of the feminized Orient. Thanks in large part to the work of Edward Said, it has become a commonplace that the Western view of the “Orient” is that of a feminized, marginalized Other (see particularly Lewis, *Gendering Orientalism*). Assuming a male gaze at work within *South Pacific*—its creators were Michener, Logan, Hammerstein, and Rodgers—it is no great logical leap to see that the entire work illustrates this idea, particularly within the “character” of Bali Ha’i and its primary citizen seen by the audience, Liat. Of all the characters examined in this chapter, Liat is the most supportive of the traditional missionizing (almost literally) of women by men. However, there is one item that opposes it from happening completely: the fact that Bloody Mary spends an entire scene examining Cable as a man first, and only afterward as a possible mate for her daughter. It is Mary who makes him aware of Liat, it is Mary who conveys the males to Bali Ha’i.

Bali Ha’i is the atoll seen in the distance behind every scene in *South Pacific*. It is a two-volcano island, and is already feminized and sexualized onstage before one word is said concerning it: Bali Ha’i is a breasted island. During the first conversation about it, Luther Billis protests the place being off-limits to servicemen. He wants souvenirs; the other sailors want to meet the women there “because the French planters put all their young women over there when they heard the G.I.’s were coming” (28). More to the

¹²⁶ In “Bali Ha’i,” the repeated tone is a large part of the song’s structure, and is only a semi-tone below, creating an even more insistent desire for it to resolve. See below for a discussion of that song.

point, the moment this conversation is over, the men sing “There Is Nothing Like A Dame,” a song crystallizing their (sexual) desire for both the site and its inhabitants.

After this, Bloody Mary and the audience meet Lieutenant Joseph Cable. Cable was apparently a problem of sorts during rehearsals, with Mary Martin recalling that the actor was about to be released from the show because “he just didn’t look sexy enough.” After Martin cut his hair, Logan “came along, with the wardrobe mistress, and redesigned his costume. Josh kept saying, ‘Tighter, tighter,’ and the wardrobe lady made him some of the sexiest pants anyone ever had. He could hardly sit down” (Martin 166). In fact, Cable becomes the focal point of the Gaze that is overtly turned, in this show, upon the men. This would account, in part, for Logan’s memory of how Juanita Hall’s Bloody Mary, “with chilling concentration on Bill Tabbert’s musculature, sang ‘Bali Ha’i’” (Logan 276).¹²⁷ Mary is looking for a husband for her daughter Liat, and will find in Cable not only a suitable suitor, but also the means to turn the Gaze back upon the female, the silent and beautiful Liat.

The song “Bali Ha’I” arrives after Mary initially describes the island to Cable, after determining his marital status. Michener’s description of the island is that of a suppliant, exotic woman (Liat, in fact). Bloody Mary subjectifies the location for Cable, allowing him to imagine it to be whatever he wishes. “Bali Hai’i mean ‘I am your special island’ . . . mean . . . ‘Here I am.’ Bali Ha’i is *your* special island, Lootellan. I know! You listen! You hear island call to you. Listen! You no hear something? Listen!” (39). Ironically, it is through hearing that Cable is able to subjectify the site, because he is unable to listen to Liat (who barely speaks) and therefore discover her personality. In

¹²⁷ In fact, her first words to him after she establishes that he is not a threat to her business are “Hey, Lootellan! You damn sexy man!” (37).

other words, the very thing that allows him to subjectify Bali Ha'i as a suppliant woman is what would normally keep him from doing so with Liat.

The Lieutenant does eventually hear the island, to an orchestral reprise of Mary's song. While from the stage directions in the libretto it is clear what is going on, the vocal score is quite explicit; the musical underscoring is entitled "Cable Hears 'Bali Ha'i.'"

The music in this spot is among the score's most exotic, with extraordinary amounts of chromaticism in the accompaniment, even after Cable begins singing a reprise of the song.¹²⁸

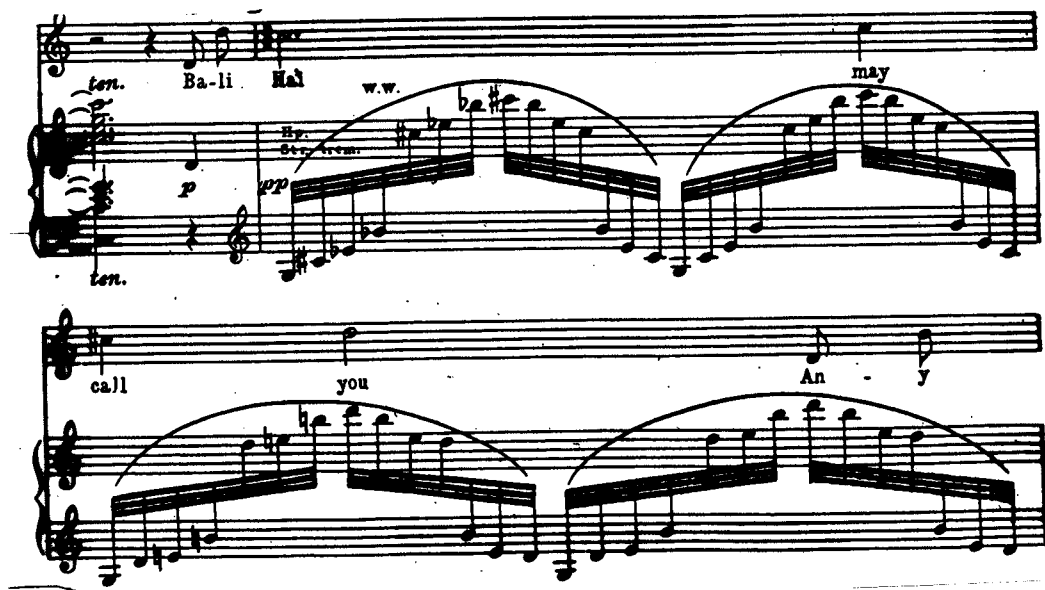


Figure 5.7: "Cable Hears Bali Ha'i."

The instrumentation for *South Pacific* is relatively traditional; Rodgers believed that suggestion was easier for American ears than true pastiche, particularly with regard to exotic sounds found in Asian music. Aside from a harp, the color within the orchestration stems from the percussion section, which includes a marimba, a trap set

¹²⁸ This type of underscoring is traditionally developed by the dance arranger and/or orchestrator; in this case, the two were the inestimable Trude Rittman and Robert Russell Bennett, respectively.

(unusual in 1940s orchestra pits) and an “oriental tom-tom.”¹²⁹ Where a great deal of the color enters is in the use of chromaticism, as well as a variant in Rodgers’ customary highlighting of the seventh of a song’s key. Along with his use of melodies based upon scales, (see Chapter Four’s discussion of *Babes in Arms*), Rodgers is known for the prominent place of the seventh in his melodic lines, although these sevenths are more often than not flat sevenths. An example would be the note accompanying the syllable “morn” in the following example.



Figure 5.8: “Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin’.”

In “Bali Ha’I, the seventh is major, rather than minor. The three notes that frame the title are an octave leap followed by a semitone fall.



Figure 5.9: “Bali Ha’i” figure.

Thus, the movement in this motive is from the most stable interval in Western music to one of the least, and to one for which the majority of listeners most desire a resolution. This semitone fall in “Bali Ha’i” is always preceded by one of the three notes in the tonic chord (C major in this case). Eventually, the note resolves to one of those chord tones, but often only after toying with audience expectations by several repetitions of the note.

¹²⁹ C.f. the instrumentation for *The King and I*, which includes these same instruments as well as bells, a gong, a triangle, temple blocks, an oriental drum, finger cymbals, a wood block, a ratchet, and a slap stick.



Figure 5.10: “Here am I, your special island!”

Given that the island of Bali Ha’I itself has been presented to the audience in pliant and tractable terms, this melodic insistence on the repeated seventh actually contradicts such ideas by remaining exactly where it wishes, resolving not when audiences expect (or wish) it to, but in its own time. This interval may seem exotic (and sensuous and sexual), but it is not entirely the “feminine” melodic idea that Liat seems to represent. Instead, the repetition tells Cable that while exotic pleasures may appear on the island, they are not entirely at his beck and call.

In “You’ve Got to Be Carefully Taught:’ The Politics of Race in Rodgers and Hammerstein’s *South Pacific*,” Andrea Most’s examination of racial stereotypes inherent within the work, she notes that “the relationship between Joe Cable and Bloody Mary’s daughter Liat is plagued with . . . problems of stereotype. His initial attraction to her is perfectly clear—she is a beautiful, docile, exotic, and willing child-woman who thinks he is a god” (314). Most points out that Liat has no voice onstage, not even a song (the currency of the musical stage). She exists almost entirely as a sexual being, the personification of Bali Ha’i. When Mary introduces them, “the two young people continue to regard each other with silent, longing interest.” This silence is disquieting, not least because in Michener’s original story “Fo’Dolla’,” the two spend a great deal of time conversing in French; in the musical, when Cable is told that the girl speaks French, she responds “Je parle Francais—un peu.” She will say exactly six more words within

the musical, primarily “Oui” and “Non.” As mentioned earlier, this silence gives Cable a chance to employ the male Gaze to continue to subjectify Liat throughout the evening.

The scene ends with the music providing the sexual intensity felt by the two; even the stage directions in the libretto describe the music in sexual terms. “The music builds to a rapturous climax. Cable gathers Liat in his arms. She reaches her small arms up to his neck. He lifts her off her feet. The lights fade slowly as his hand slides her blouse up her back toward her shoulders” (92). The score is here marked “Andante appassionato” and quotes the most chromatic melodic line in the entire show, that associated with the phrases “Your own special hopes” and “Your own special dreams” in the song “Bali Ha’i.

After this, the lights dim to denote the passage of time, following which Cable sings “Younger Than Springtime.”¹³⁰ How, Logan wondered, could they inform the audience “that Liat and Cable had made sexual love? I solved it simply by suggesting that Cable take off *his* shirt. . . . It turned out to be one of the most poetic and erotic moments in the play” (Logan 298). Cable’s song is a paean, although less to Liat herself than to various attributes which are associated with the sexualized Orientalism that passes for her character: “Warmer than winds of June are the gentle lips you gave me. / Gaye than laughter are you, / Sweeter than music are you” (94).

Cable’s obsession with Liat, while presented in mostly positive terms, is also put forth in images of overpowering intensity. When he does hear the music denoting Bali Ha’i, it literally stops him “in his tracks” (50). When he finally meets Liat, the two continue to stare at each other while her mother introduces them, but “in some strange

¹³⁰ A song originally meant for *Allegro*. *South Pacific* featured a cut song for Bloody Mary that would end up in *The King and I*: “Getting to Know You.”

way, Bloody Mary seems to have been forgotten by both of them” (92). After he leaves Liat’s hut, he “crosses the stage in a kind of dream. . . . Several of the French girls try to flirt with Cable, but he doesn’t know they’re alive. He goes right past them” (96-97). In Act II, the audience discovers that Cable has contracted malaria, having gone to the island every day until stopped by his illness. Emile de Becque is worried by Cable’s “strangeness” as he declares his need to get back there. When Liat enters, Cable says that he is “beginning to see her again like last night.” Upon being convinced of her reality, he tells her “I thought I was dreaming” (118). When he tells Bloody Mary he cannot marry her daughter, she smashes the watch he has given Liat as a present and as they leave, Cable is described as “dazed” and “stunned.” (123). These images allow the audience to observe that his desire for Liat is not based on reality but is instead fevered and dreamlike.

The sexuality, presented as possessing such dreamlike intensity, is mirrored in Cable’s music. “Younger Than Springtime,” while quite simple on the surface, contains an ostinato-like accompanimental figure which emphasizes the intensity and heightened emotion inherent in the situation.

When Mary brings her daughter to visit the sick Lieutenant, she tells him that she will work for both of them while the lovers “walk through woods, swim in sea, sing, dance, talk happy. No think about Philadelphia. Is not good. Talk about beautiful thing and make love all day long. You like? You buy?” (120).¹³¹ She then sings “Happy Talk,” a song more than one author has pointed out as deeply, inherently ironic within the context of a musical where Liat, for all intents and purposes, does not speak. During the

¹³¹ “You buy?” is perhaps a viable question, given that Mary has more or less pimped for her daughter throughout the play.

song, Liat “performs a gentle, childish dance;” along with other Western Orientalisms inherent within the character, she is also a child who depends on those around her to make her decisions. Even Nellie responds to her as such. When the nurse sees Liat after having learned that Cable is dead, she “rushes to her impulsively and embraces her,” exclaiming “Oh, my darling!” (159).

Many of *South Pacific*’s critics feel that the only way this story *could* end is in Cable’s death (Most, Beidler), that there was no way for an audience to accept a marriage between a white man and a racial Other at the time.¹³² In 1949, at this point in American history, and certainly this near to the war’s close, the point is well-taken. In a positive spin on these criticisms, Ethan Mordden suggests that Cable dies not because it was impossible for him to marry Liat, but because he fails the moral test that “challenges the bourgeois Americans’ prejudices (Mordden *R&H* 114). Both sides of the debate are fine, as far as they go. Nevertheless, Hammerstein deliberately changed Michener’s original story, making it more positive and supportive of interracial relationships. Cable’s song of anti-prejudice, “You’ve Got to be Carefully Taught,” is well-known, but his speech afterward signifies that he, like Nellie, understands some things are more important. “You’ve got the right idea de Becque—live on an island. Yes, sir, if I get out of this thing alive, I’m not going back there! I’m coming here. All I care about is right here. To hell with the rest” (137). He obviously intends to return to Liat.

The relationship between the other couple in *South Pacific*, Nellie Forbush and Emile de Becque, is usually considered more problematic, at least in terms of what holds them together. As is so often the case, when their music is brought into the equation,

things become much clearer. Most sums up the difficulty as she discusses the fact that the relationship between Nellie, a younger woman, and Emile, an older rich man, might be construed as that of a “sugar daddy” and his young admirer.

But the sexual quid pro quo implied in such a relationship is strangely missing here. Nellie is apparently uninterested in money and Emile proposes marriage without so much as a kiss or even an arm around Nellie’s shoulder. As he sings the last line of ‘Some Enchanted Evening’ (‘never let her go’), he notably does not even touch her. Where a kiss might be expected, the stage directions read, ‘There follow several seconds of silence. Neither moves.’ Their apparent passion for each other is hard to glean from either the dialogue or the stage directions. (Most “Taught” 331)

Most believes that the connection between Emile and Nellie is difficult to render in romantic terms because “it is neither sexual nor financial—it is dramaturgical” (332).

In other words, with this approach, the anxieties about the musical’s racial complexities are at the root of why the couple is paired, in a didactic sort of arrangement.

Unfortunately, Most is forgetting two things. First, the underscoring reveals much that dialogue does not; it could be described as very sensual in this scene. Her other oversight is that Nellie and Emile are both presented as shy about the arrangement: de Becque because he is so much older than she, and Nellie because she feels like a “hick” around the “cultured Frenchman.” In fact, both are presented as much less sexually experienced than in Michener’s “Our Heroine,” where Nellie has an affair with a married man before meeting de Becque, and he has eight children by four different mistresses. With that diminution of sexual experience comes, perhaps, an increase in diffidence and shyness. Emile, as is perhaps inevitable given his gender (particularly during this era) and also as befits his more experienced sexual life, is given the more powerful love songs. Of

¹³² There are certainly enough racially Othered deaths in Rodgers and Hammerstein to make one wonder: Jud, the King of Siam, as well as Hammerstein and Kern’s Julie in *Show Boat*. By the time of Rodgers’ *No*

course, this is also due to the power of his voice, as well. Even here there are certain musical clues as to his exoticism and glamor (certainly to Nellie); he sings less regular rhythms than she does; as an inhabitant of this region, his music is slightly more chromatic than Nellie's, as well.

"Some Enchanted Evening" is a good example. While ostensibly in C-major, the melodic line continually hovers around G and the key of G-major. Much as Bloody Mary does in "Bali Ha'I," Emile achieves his effect with a recurring F#, a note far out of the scale of C major, but a major seventh in the key of G.



Figure 5.11: First lines of "Some Enchanted Evening."

In other words, while he is certainly not as exotic or sensuous as Bali Ha'i, he is nonetheless striking and out of the ordinary to Nellie.

A major difference between this couple and other musical theatre couples is that they have incompatible singing styles. As mentioned earlier, Emile was originally played by an operatic baritone named Ezio Pinza. Martin was originally alarmed at the idea of his drowning her out, so Rodgers hit upon the solution of never having them sing at the same time.¹³³ In more traditional musicals, this might serve as a problem; how can the leading couple never actually sing together? In fact, *neither* of the couples in *South Pacific* ever sing together, but that does not stop the music from connecting them, nor from portraying the passion between them. In fact, the alternation between Nellie's voice

Strings (1962), a racially mixed relationship is allowed to end with both parties alive, but separate.

¹³³ The one exception to this is when, giddy after the party, they harmonize, "'Sweet Adeline' fashion" for a moment (103).

and Emile's exemplifies the differences that keep them apart for a portion of the show, but also reflects the insistent, urgent need they have to be together, musically as well as sexually. The audience never hears the final ironing out of these differences, but it has heard her voice blending with that of his children in the reprise of "Dites-Moi." This is an important sound, because it has been the children (or, more precisely, their mother's ethnic heritage) that has kept the couple apart. Nellie's vocal acceptance of these children is the first step toward the blending of the entire family at various levels.¹³⁴

What one loses by looking only at a libretto and/or score is any intention on the part of the actors. The onstage relationship between Martin and Pinza must have been quite sensuous—if not downright sexual—for Martin says, of the scene discussed earlier, immediately after "Some Enchanted Evening,"

And the chemistry, I cannot tell you. Our first scene together, in the first-act soliloquy, we sang on opposite sides of the stage. The music swelled and Ezio walked toward me, carrying a brandy glass. It was a long walk. Every time he started my way, with that face of his, that magnetism, *that music*, a spark came across like nothing that ever happened to me before and never will again. Every curl on my little knucklehead began to stand up. Straight on end, all of them, every night and twice on matinee days. (Martin 171). (Emphasis mine)

Their duet during this scene is worth examining, as well. "Twin Soliloquies" begins quietly, with both singing their inner thoughts successively. After the vocals end, the music continues, moving directly into a piece entitled in the score "Unspoken Thoughts." This piece underscores no speech, but rather their drinking together. The music itself continues the melodic pattern begun in "Twin Soliloquies," one that will turn with little effort into "Some Enchanted Evening." But it first rises to *forte*, and by the end of the page will increase to a triple *f*, or fully as loud as possible. The accompanying actions,

¹³⁴ Nellie is linked with the children aurally before she has ever met them. The melody of "A Cockeyed

described in the libretto's stage directions, are completely in accord with this music and the passion it portrays. "As they drink, the music rises to great ecstatic heights. One is made aware that in this simple act of two people who are falling in love, each drinking brandy, there are turbulent thoughts and feelings going on in their hearts and brains" (11). Without this music, the couple's intense ardor will not be apparent, particularly when only the libretto is read.

Logan and Hammersstein had difficulty writing the couple's next scene together, primarily because they originally attempted to portray the actual party where de Becque introduced Nellie to his friends. Eventually, because the party itself was blocking the rest of the scene, the two decided to begin the scene *after* the event. When Hammerstein suggested this, Logan was energized. "'And then Emile pulls Nellie onstage by her wrists. They're both full of wine and he wants to get into bed with her this minute!' 'Exactly! They're high. They're passionate!'" (Logan 276. It is during this scene that the couple does, in fact, sing at the same time. However, due to passion and giddiness, the two never alight for long on any one song, skipping through bits of several very quickly. The scene still appears to be leading to a musical climax—perhaps a final song before the two retire—but the music is interrupted by Nellie's meeting Emile's children. Since the children interrupt the passion, it seems plausible that their song with Nellie at the musical's end reopens it.

The primary sexual subversion in *South Pacific* is twofold. Two men known for the conservative bent of their shows did in fact write a musical in which sex plays a major role. And unlike the role of sex and sexuality in *Pipe Dream*, there is no

Optimist" is very much an extended version of the tune from the children's "Dites-Moi."

camouflage, no cleaning up of the ideas. More importantly, there is an attempt to equalize the Gaze; men are presented as sexual objects as well as women. Bloody Mary appropriates the Gaze entirely when watching Cable, and the audience is treated to more male nudity than female in this musical. It would be four years after *South Pacific* premiered before Kinsey published his study of female sexuality, but it never made as big a splash as did the volume on males. He may have suggested that women had sexual power even in the first volume, but what the world remembered was “what Kinsey did was give the American male permission to change his basic life way, his basic lifestyle” (Petersen 229). *South Pacific* would represent the only sexual empowerment some of the women in the audience would see for years.

Is it Real or is it Cybersex?: Sex in the 1990s

The 1990s began with AIDS firmly fixed as a fact of life. It also gave birth to cybersex, wherein boundaries blurred even further as to what constituted intercourse: is it sex if the two people never meet in the flesh? Although Catherine MacKinnon wrote *Sexual Harrassment of Working Women* in 1979, it was only in the 1990s that it particularly leapt to national attention, during the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings in 1991. The same year, the film *Thelma and Louise* portrayed women responding to unwanted male advances with violence, provoking one male author to proclaim that “the male gaze, it seems, is grounds for immediate retaliation” after he describes a scene wherein a man “forces himself” on Louise (Petersen 450). This is not just a male Gaze, but whatever the provocation, women were turning that gaze back on itself. Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine would do it musically.

“Beauty is Power, Longing a Disease:” Upsetting the Gaze in *Passion*

Stephen Sondheim needs little introduction. Arguably the most influential and important musical theatre innovator since the late 1950s, he is the one composer and lyricist within these pages who has been the subject of a significant amount of academic examination. He is recognized as having extended the potential of the American musical for the articulation of serious theatrical ideas. While his supporters are many (and fierce), he remains something of a cult figure, with only one hit song (“Send in the Clowns,” from 1973’s *A Little Night Music*) to his credit. One reason for this is his music’s imaginary inability to be hummed; indeed, melody and harmony are thoroughly bound up in each other in Sondheim’s songs. His music has been said to resemble that of Ravel and Copland (Banfield).

Most of Sondheim’s musicals have surprised audiences, breaking some kind of ground in their approach to both the subject and to musical theatre. He has rarely repeated himself; his musicals continually challenge audiences through various methods: sometimes plotless, sometimes taking place chronologically backwards, often Brechtian.

Passion is based on an obscure 1869 Italian novel by Ignio Ugi Tarchetti, originally entitled *Fosca* (but retitled *Passion* in Lawrence Venuti’s 1994 translation). The book, which is apparently quite autobiographical, was serialized in a Milanese periodical; sadly, Tarchetti died before finishing the work and his friend Salvatore Farina concluded the book. It was filmed in Italy in 1981 by director Ettore Scola; the film was the first version of the story to come to Sondheim’s attention. Sondheim, with James Lapine as book writer, adapted the work for the musical stage in 1994.

The work was originally considered for part of a double bill: the second half was to be based on San Fussell's *Muscles*, a memoir of a bookish young man who becomes obsessed with bodybuilding. The composer/lyricist realized it would have been two one-act musicals about people's external manifestations (Secrest 379), but plans for the second half of the evening were scrapped as *Passion* grew into a full-length work.

The work takes place in 1863, in Italy, three years before the premiere of *The Black Crook*. The latter show was able to become a huge hit by virtue of showing women's legs. Alternately fulminated against from pulpits and decried from political platforms, audiences arrived in droves to see such a thing. In fact, the early musical theatre, including music hall entertainments, tended to get its female leads into trousers as quickly as possible, in order to maximize the exposure of their legs. This was, remember, an era when proper ladies would never have exhibited their ankles in public. However, sexual behavior was part and parcel of a Victorian discourse, however that conversation may have played out. Regarding sexual behavior, Bryan Strong has said that

The Victorian constellation of values included work, industry, good habits, piety and noble ideals. Indeed, without sexual repression the Victorians believed that it was impossible for those other values to exist in an ideal character. If a man was pure, he was also frugal, hardworking, temperate and governed by habit. (qtd in Petersen 29).

Italy, where *Passion* is set (and from where its original author hailed) has traditionally been seen as a more sexually open and permissive country than Britain was at the same time. It is, at the same time, the home of the Roman Catholic church, which has frowned on non-heteronormative sexual behavior, including sex outside of marriage. "Sex and sexuality are still off limits in many places in Italy" ("Bi Italy" n.p.).

Passion, which is set in 1863, premiered in the mid-1990s, by which time AIDS had become a commonplace of life. There are certainly many parallels to AIDS in *Passion*, and many critics found themselves moved by the piece, even as others attacked it stridently. It is a difficult and prickly musical to experience, being about “love without reason,” mercy, pride, or shame.

The plot concerns Giorgio Bachetti, a handsome military captain, who is in love with the beautiful, married Clara (Italian for “light”) but is transferred to a remote outpost. While there, he meets Fosca (“dark”), the female cousin of his commanding officer, Colonel Ricci. Fosca is “an ugly, sickly woman: incredibly thin and sallow, her face all bones and nose, her hair pulled tightly back” (Lapine and Sondheim 20). As she and Giorgio become friends, it becomes clear that she wants more from the relationship than simple friendship. Eventually, Giorgio feels impelled to ask for a short leave to go back and visit Clara; he promises to write Fosca and does so, a letter detailing his love for Clara. When he returns to the post, Fosca takes a turn for the worse; the outpost doctor suggests that her illness has turned mortal, and that she is letting herself die over Giorgio. The doctor arranges a covert visit to Fosca’s bedroom, where she asks Giorgio to write her a love letter; she dictates it and he unwillingly obliges. Later, when the Colonel thanks Giorgio for his kindness to his cousin, he relates the story (told in flashback) of an earlier marriage. A handsome Count Ludovic of Austria married her for her money; after bleeding her family dry, he left, leaving both Fosca and her parents in poor health.

Meanwhile, as Giorgio reads another letter from Clara, Fosca finds him, demanding to know why he has been avoiding her. When she collapses, he carries her back to the barracks through a raging storm. He becomes ill and is given a sick leave of

forty days. Once again, Fosca follows him to the train station and again, Giorgio asks her to leave him alone and face facts. She tells him that “loving you is not a choice. / It’s who I am” and that she would die for him, something Clara would never do. Giorgio, shaken, disembarks at the next stop to take her back home. When he arrives in Milan, he tells Clara that unless she leaves her husband, he will only stay four days with her. Afraid of losing her child, she refuses, even when Giorgio invites her to bring her son. When Giorgio returns to the barracks, he finds that he has been transferred back to headquarters; Fosca throws herself into his arms and begs him not to leave. The furor instigated by this action causes the Colonel to find the letter Giorgio had written at Fosca’s request; he challenges the Captain to a duel. Giorgio meets Fosca once again in her bedroom, telling her that his affair with Clara is over, because “no one has ever loved me as deeply as you.” Before he leaves, she pulls him toward the bed. Knowing that any physical act of love might kill her, he protests, but she counters “To die loved is to have lived.” The next morning, Giorgio wounds the Colonel. Some time later, Giorgio is back in Milan, reading a letter from the doctor. Fosca died three days after Giorgio last saw her, knowing nothing of what had passed between her lover and her cousin. The doctor has enclosed some personal items, including a letter from Fosca written just before she died. In it, she tells him that she now wants to live, knowing that she is loved. However, because she *is* loved, she feels she can die in peace.

Passion debuted on May 9, 1994 to mystified and sometimes even hostile audiences. For one thing, there was a distinct absence of the irony so prevalent in most of Sondheim’s work; this musical is a straightforward exploration of a love triangle. Not only that, but Sondheim’s trademark intricate and literate rhyming is missing from the

musical; what rhyme there is, is irregular and less pointed. The original New York production had no intermission; it also did not list individual song titles in the program, as songs and dialogue flow in and out of each other with no real moment for applause, nor any final musical buttons at the end of songs.¹³⁵ The chorus, consisting of soldiers, maids, and other characters, will often echo letters that pass back and forth, acting as both bearers of news and echoers of the inmost thoughts of the three leads. In fact, with its almost continuous music, *Passion* comes closer than perhaps any other Sondheim work to being opera; he himself has said the work is quite similar to chamber opera (Secret 388).

The work's title joins the list of Sondheim titles that contain more than one meaning.¹³⁶ The dictionary gives four definitions, all of which are appropriate on some level: ardent love; suffering; intense feelings of any kind; and the suffering and death of Jesus. All are found in some form within the musical; even the last is evident in the redemption Giorgio seems to find after Fosca's death. Like Sondheim's other works, *Passion* is tightly woven, with references—musical and lyrical—recurring and changing in ever-new equations. Examples abound. As Clara is married, so too was Fosca. Both affairs begin with one member feeling pity for the other. Fosca unconsciously (perhaps) echoes the words of her ex-husband (who watched her at her window) when she meets Giorgio, whom she watches from her window.

Female sexuality is a very large part of *Passion*. One of the items most remarked upon was the opening scene:

¹³⁵ The original cast recording did give the song titles, but they are mostly generic titles such as "First Letter," "Transition," and the like.

Lights slowly illuminate a bed with two figures who are making love in it. The woman (Clara) is astride the man (Giorgio). Drums crescendo as Clara emits a soundless cry of orgasm, the orchestra substituting for her voice as the drums cease. Music continues, murmuring underneath as Clara shudders a couple of times and falls into Giorgio's arms. (1)

Sex and death are often paired (Wagner's *Liebestod* is perhaps the primary example) in art, and *Passion* is no exception. Clara's first words are "I'm so happy, / I'm afraid I'll die / Here in your arms" (1). The first two conversations Giorgio has with Fosca concern death; it is during these scenes that he discovers a sort of attraction, although he is completely puzzled by it. He asks Clara "How could anyone / So unbeautiful / Stir my memory of you? . . . How long I've been without you near. / And then to hear a woman's voice, / To hold a woman's arm, / To feel a woman's touch" (30-31). Later on, during his illness, Giorgio wakes from a dream; the audience sees this dream and the images are obviously meant to suggest sexual congress: "A bed is rolled onstage. At first we can't quite make out who is in it: we see a black-caped form writhing as the bed spins. The black figure lifts up: it is Fosca" (95). Giorgio's first words to the doctor who wakes him from this dream are "She was dragging me down into the grave with her" (97). Giorgio is first brought to Fosca's bedside by the doctor, who believes she is willing herself to die and that this visit will aid in her recovery. Finally, it is implied strongly that when Giorgio finally does make love with Fosca, it causes her eventual death. Doctor Tambourri tells Giorgio that "You understand this woman could never be your lover. Her physical condition—" (120) and is cut off. When Fosca leads Giorgio to her bed, he resists out of concern for her health, but her response is "To die loved is to have lived" (123).

¹³⁶ For example, *Follies* both harks back to the Ziegfeld *Follies* and examines the follies of its characters.

Sondheim has always limited his musical vocabulary within a work, using a specific musical conceit to hold his score together.¹³⁷ Musically, *Passion* is also a logical outgrowth of the trends he had set earlier. Particularly since the 1980s, he has begun working with smaller groupings of melodic ideas: *Sunday in the Park With George* (1984) uses variations on a specific chord not only to underscore George's ideas, but to create melodies out of variations on this same chord (particularly "Finishing the Hat"). *Into the Woods* (1987) uses melodic and lyrical variations for three characters' songs as they learn more about the world around them.

The score for *Passion* is modeled on even smaller melodic ideas; the majority can be said to spring from the military bugle calls which pervade the show. Accompaniment and melody are not only based on either sets of three or six notes, but often contain a triad of some sort that echoes the bugle calls.

Sondheim has said that at one point he planned to end the play with the same song with which it began—with Fosca and Giorgio in bed singing Clara and Giorgio's song. Ultimately, however, he decided that 'bookending the story was too on the nose,' and 'James [Lapine] wanted me to explore the change in Fosca, not just in Giorgio.' What survives from the original plan of the repeated song is a musical motif that pervades the play, 'in a thousand different guises, in inversion and in retrograde in both major and minor keys,' as well as words and melodies quoted and modified. To hear the same thing in a different setting stresses the changed circumstance. (Knapp 108)

When Fosca first declares her feelings for Giorgio, she tells him, of the other soldiers, "They hear drums / We hear music." Military drums and bugle calls insistently impinge upon Giorgio's relationships with the women. The show begins with a military drum motto; only after this does the first scene between Giorgio and Clara start. As it

¹³⁷ Examples of this would include the fact that all the music in *A Little Night Music* (1973) is in some form of triple meter. *Pacific Overtures*, about the Westernization of Japan, builds its music primarily on

ends, the drums take over once again. These foreboding musical moments quickly come to introduce scenes with Fosca, but as the play moves along and Giorgio begins to consider his feelings for her, they become thunder, and then disappear altogether. In fact, as Giorgio discovers the truth behind this all-encompassing love, the military sounds disappear entirely; even when the original mottoes appear, they are softened and robbed of their “masculine” martial quality. Non-martial music wins the evening’s battle between military and non-military sound.

The music repositions itself in one other way. Clara’s songs, “which are essentially written in major keys, have a bright waltzy feel to them that gradually mutates into something sadder” as she loses Giorgio bit by bit. Simultaneously, Fosca’s music starts as melancholy and becomes more lighthearted “as she comes closer to realizing her love” (Kakutani 29)

Fosca has her own theme, one that is quite different from the other music, and which signals her entrance in a manner quite different from that of other musical heroines. Well before she is ever seen, “We hear elegant Chopinesque piano from upstairs as Clara exits; Giorgio looks up” and asks about it. He is told “That’s Signora Fosca playing” (13).

pentatonic modes, with the introduction of the seventh only after the Westerners have begun to exert their influence on the country.



Figure 5.12: “‘Chopinesque’ Theme.”

It recurs twice more: as underscoring when Fosca first appears, and during the flashback when the fraudulent Count Ludovic initially arrives. Oddly, when Fosca appears, she does not even behave “normally” within the confines of a musical—this piano music underscores her interest, but she speaks, and barely sings at all in the first several pages of the score after her entrance. The fact that this music is called “Chopinesque” is not just a random musical pastiche on the part of Sondheim. Chopin’s music was often called “feminine” and otherworldly by critics of both his day and since then (see Kallberg). This music will appear in a variation, when Giorgio realizes that “No One Has Ever Loved Me” like Fosca (Konas 213).

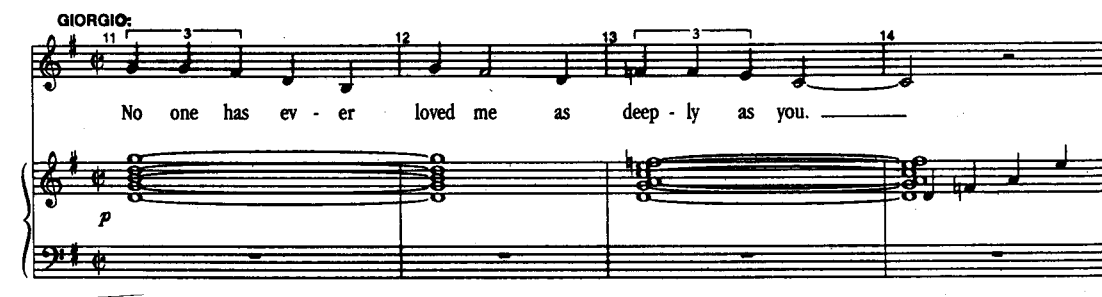


Figure 5.13: “No One Has Ever Loved Me.”

It signals Giorgio taking Fosca's music onto himself.

In fact, it is the triumph of Fosca's music and love—of the entire female appropriation of the Gaze, in fact—that I believe accounts for much of the hostility towards *Passion*. From previews onward, audiences responded badly to this musical. There were shouts of “Die, Fosca! Die!” (Secrest 386) and at least one “Good!” from the balcony when Giorgio was informed of Fosca's death (Goodhart 222). There has been a cheerful acceptance of two shows running simultaneously in New York on a similar theme: *Phantom of the Opera* (which opened in 1986) and *Beauty and the Beast*, which opened just after *Passion*. Yet the responses to these stories have been positive; even the (male) critics, if not enchanted by the musicals themselves, have had no problem with the storylines. Yet none have been as pleasant to the same idea—reversed by gender—in *Passion*. Benedict Nightingale in the *London Times* said that the ending was much as if Michael Douglas had lifted Glenn Close from the bathtub in which she meets her fate in *Fatal Attraction* and given her “a big, doting kiss.” The critic for the *Washington Post* said that Fosca seemed more like a “clinical case than a heroine,” stating that if only the audience could see some kind of “dark side” of Giorgio that would explain his move to the “perversity and self-destruction” of Fosca's love (Knapp 106).

Later theatre writers have been equally negative. Shoshana Knapp likes the musical, but just as her essay “Difference and Sameness” winds up, she likens Giorgio's decision to Mae West's statement “When choosing between two evils, I always pick the one I haven't tried before.” Sandor Goodhart attempts to find the musical's origins within Sondheim's own relationship with his mother, and cannot understand Giorgio's decision, either. “Clara is presented as demand-free and lusciously attractive, while

Fosca is presented as an emotional child,” although Goodhart could understand the situation if Sondheim and Lapine had kept the novel’s original moment where Clara, rather than Giorgio, breaks off their relationship. It would “allow Giorgio’s embracing of Fosca to be understood as compensatory—making the best of a bad situation” (223).

Why such exceptional hostility to this particular brand of *Beauty and the Beast*? It is my belief that it springs not just from Western patriarchal inability to understand an attractive man’s desire for an ugly or plain woman, but from a complete inverting and queering of the Gaze. On top of this, Sondheim and Lapine use the onstage sexual encounters to empower the subaltern female within this inversion. On a basic level, the story overturns our basic stereotypes. It’s completely understandable why Fosca should desire Giorgio, but not vice-versa. Yet everyone seems to understand completely why Belle, the “Beauty” in Disney’s *Beauty and the Beast*, desires the Beast.

At the beginning, the Gaze is comfortably directed where it has traditionally been. During the first scene, Clara and Giorgio are in bed together and it is Clara whom the audience sees fully naked; Giorgio is seen from the waist up. Later, when Giorgio is trying to re-seduce her into staying, he does so with an inventory of her body, aligning himself and the watching/listening audience further with the traditional male Gaze:

God,
You are so beautiful.
I love to see you in the light,
Clear and beautiful,
(Touching her lightly)
Memorize every inch,
Every part of you
To take with me

Your feet so soft,
As if they've never touched the ground,
Your skin so white,
So pure,
So delicate. (7-8).

There is relatively little physical description of Clara within the stage directions, but as evidenced by the quotation at the beginning of this section, the ugly Fosca is described fully. Even the musical Gaze ("Listening?") originally supports the visual Gaze: Fosca is originally heard screaming twice,¹³⁸ is presented in menacing shadow before she speaks, and is given very little music to sing upon her entrance (song being the currency of the musical stage).

In *Sweeney Todd*, Mrs. Lovett's introduction to the eponymous character consists of a reprise of his song about his wife, with the appropriate gender changes: "There was a barber and his wife / And he was beautiful." In an echo of this, Fosca appropriates Giorgio's words and music as she sings "God, / You are so beautiful. / Come let me see you in the light" (57). Fosca's gaze is intense. She has watched Giorgio from her window, much as she did the counterfeit Count who briefly became her husband. Giorgio is perhaps more uncomfortable with being the object of the Gaze. When Ludovico is found out, he tells Fosca they made a bargain, and to a waltz, sings "You gave me your money, I gave you my looks / And my charm. / And my arm. / . . . / If women sell their looks, / Why can't a man, / If he can?" (83). It is after this unhappy truth is borne in on Fosca that the cast sings the lines that head this subchapter: "Beauty is power, / Longing a disease" (86). Yet Fosca has the power in the relationship, which

¹³⁸ Her screams are a bizarre sort of foreshadowing with regard to the love story. During the opening scene, Clara's cry of orgasm is heard in the orchestra. She has no voice here, but Fosca does.

inverts the very traditional power structure we all know; the fact that she is a woman simply inverts it further.

During Giorgio's nightmare when Fosca is on top of him, she is presented in terms that recall both a succubus and a vampire. Giorgio tells the doctor that "She was dragging me down into the grave with her. She was hugging me. Kissing me with her cold lips. Those thin arms pulling me, drawing me, like icy tentacles" (97). Not only is this another equation of sex and death, but it represents another substitution of Fosca for Clara, as she is atop him.

In fact, it is here that the plan becomes clearer. In both cases where sexual congress is seen (or suggested), the women are on top. Moreover, when Giorgio first visits Fosca in her bedroom, she asks him to write her a letter. She co-opts his voice again, as well as his gaze, in the musical's most exceptional lyric:

I wanted you to vanish from sight,
But now I see you in a different light,
And though I cannot love you,
I wish that I could love you.
For now I'm seeing love
Like none I've ever known,
A love as pure as breath,
As permanent as death,
Implacable as stone (61).

It is, in fact, another letter from the now-dead Fosca that ends the musical, sung by both her spirit and Giorgio as he reads it. Again, it continues to force the audience to confront Fosca's Gaze:

Now at last
I *see* what comes
From being loved.

Strange, how merely
Feeling loved,
You see things clearly. . . .
Everywhere I *look*,
Things are different.” (129-130) (emphasis mine).

Immediately afterward, the company segues into a portion of the original letter dictated by Fosca. Giorgio sings the majority of the lines within both letters, thus giving affirmation to Fosca’s Gaze, but allowing her once again to sing for, and on top, of him.

Some of the audience discomfort may have been because *Passion* can be seen as a metaphor for AIDS. Early on, Fosca tells Giorgio that “Sickness is normal to me, as health is to you” (21). She dies from the overtaking of her body when she makes love with Giorgio, a man whom she desires. Audience anxieties must have multiplied as the evening wore on. Unlike the pretty, healthy-looking characters with AIDS in *Rent*, Fosca does not show the audience how nice disease can be, nor is she part of a supportive community. She can find no one, in fact, to love her, and only her cousin, who “feels responsible” for her, will take her in. Jonathan Larsen’s *Rent* attempted to normalize AIDS for audiences, but succeeded instead in making it almost trendy. *Passion*, if it is indeed a metaphor for AIDS (or simply for an ultimate Other who believes him/herself unlovable), teaches that sick and unpleasant people are worthy of love, too. It also disrupts the binary of beauty/ugliness within the traditional Gaze, something the other “Beauty and the Beast” musicals do not.

“Their Things Were Out:” Conclusion

The sexual revolution in the 1960s and 1970s saw fruit on the Broadway musical stage, too. *Hair* (1969) featured nudity prominently as part of its appeal to audiences,

although the nudity was added only after the piece moved to Broadway. It opened the floodgates, however. In quick succession came *Applause* (1970) where the cast, wearing only long aprons, mooned the audience at a number's end. 1970 also saw the premiere of Tom Eyen's *The Dirtiest Show in Town*. But the best (!) was yet to appear: 1976 saw the premiere of both *Let My People Come*¹³⁹ and *Oh, Calcutta!*'s (1972) move from off-Broadway. Unlike the latter, *Let My People Come* managed to include positive gay and lesbian images, although the subject matter was still primarily heteronormative sexuality. With the exception of *Hair*, none of the above musicals has ever seen a major revival. Despite some talented people attached the creative side of them, none of these scores or libretti is particularly good. They depended more upon shock value and titillation for audiences than they did on worthwhile scripts or scores, leading to the conclusion that sex on the musical stage seems to work better as an unconscious underscoring of the primary points, rather than as the primary, conscious reasoning behind a show.

In fact, the nudie musicals cannot be called sexually subversive when they take as their primary goal the hegemonic establishment of sex. They also become much more predictable, seeming far more like extended, musicalized dirty jokes than musical comedies with a point to make. On the other hand, when the sex is subversive, audiences are treated to sexuality as property of the women (*Leave It To Me!*, *Passion*) or an upsetting of the Gaze, as in both *Passion* and *South Pacific*, where at least an attempt was made to direct it toward males as much as females.

¹³⁹ Shortly after this musical opened, it—and the entire nudity craze—was parodied in a revue called *Tuscaloosa's Calling Me (But I'm Not Going)*. One number concerned a theatre patron, mystified by the rage for stage nudity, singing of seeing a show called “something like *Let My Folks Arrive*. . . . And their things were out, / Yes, their things were out, / Really, I'm not kidding, their things were out.”

As of this writing, Webster's dictionary still gives the definition of sexual intercourse as "the penetration of the vagina by the penis" rather than noting that there are many other types of sexualized behavior, nor that women might be able to have some say in the matter, or who might have their own power. Fortunately, the women in these three musicals exert their own type of strength, taking matters into their own hands, finding their own lovers, and assuming their own power(s). Dolly is quite free as to whom she dispenses her favors, and while Liat's relationship is the most troubling of the three from a feminist perspective, at least her mother has the power to bring the "right" man to her. Fosca is perhaps the most Other of all the characters examined in this dissertation. By modern American standards, it is unforgivable that she is physically ugly, yet she not only makes the approaches to Giorgio, but the sheer power of her love wins the object of her own desire in the end. Not only that, but Fosca's powerful Gaze forces Giorgio to *respond* to her, completely submerging his own power in the face of her overwhelming intensity.

The heteronormative male Gaze has been part of musical theatre since its "beginning" with *The Black Crook*, and that norm has appeared consistently as musicals for "tired businessmen," which always featured attractive, leggy women. Things began to change conspicuously with the rise of the women's right's movement. The ladies of *The Black Crook* gave way to Fosca, who gazes back upon the male so forcefully that he is compelled to return the gaze to her rather than avoiding or approaching her on his terms.

“Sometimes I think I’ve found my hero,
But it’s a queer romance.”
“Ten Cents a Dance,” *Simple Simon* (Lorenz Hart)

CHAPTER VI

“QUEER TWISTS:” HOMOSEXUALITY ON THE AMERICAN MUSICAL STAGE

The idea of queering is bound up within musical theatre. “Queer” is, as many know, more than just an academic term for gay and lesbian persons. As Alexander Doty says in *Making Things Perfectly Queer* (1993), “When I use the term ‘queer’ . . . I do so to suggest a range of nonstraight expression in, or in response to, mass culture. This range includes specifically gay, lesbian, and bisexual expressions; but it also includes all other potential (and potentially unclassifiable) nonstraight positions” (xvi). In other words, the aim is to emphasize that straight norms exist, that binaries may be the traditional manner in which humans have examined the world around them, but that there exists a vast range of possibilities outside those binaries. “Queer” readings challenge or confuse habitual awareness, particularly regarding the customary sexual and gender classifications. “Queer” can inscribe junctures between sexuality, class, race, and ethnicity—all kinds of Otherness, in fact (Hennessy 145).

As discussed in the Introduction, musical theatre begins by queering realism, a genre that rarely portrayed gay/lesbian people (when they were depicted, it was in a negative light). Michael Thomas Ford, a gay male humorist, says of his first visit to a musical,

I sat, horrified, as grown men and women twirled and bounced across the stage in costumes straight out of *Mary Poppins*. Even worse, they all sang, while dancing. They sang while walking. They just kept singing. I knew this didn’t happen in real life, and it confused me. Why, I

wondered, didn't our mailman belt out a jaunty chorus as he popped letters into the box? . . . I immediately suspected that someone was having a joke at my expense, and I didn't appreciate it. (62).

Wayne Koestenbaum, *The Queen's Throat*, an exploration of opera and its association(s) with opera, postulates that there is something about singing onstage, whether in opera or musical theatre, that queers the entire theatrical experience: music has historically been considered effeminizing. In Plato's *Republic*, the philosopher states that music enters the ear and essentially softens the soul, resulting in the softening of the entire man. It is this effeminizing effect that queers the "masculine" language of the libretto: opera/musical theatre's "queerest feature is its divided foundation, its marriage of words and music." Both genres set up this system

and then help us forget it. Listening, we forget the difference between words and music, masculine and feminine, because opera [and musical theatre] is a bastard genre, a hybrid, erasing distinctions. *We want the distinction between words and music to exist, so that opera can erase the border in an act of apparent transgression* (emphasis his). (Koestenbaum 176-177)

Another queer aspect of musical theatre would concern the creators of the works themselves, the large majority of whom are male and who work in pairs. Many of these pairs (often the most famous ones) stay together as collaborators for as long, if not longer, than heteronormative couples in romantic/familial relationships. More to the point, because the collaboration of words and music imitates a queer melding, and since these couples are usually male (there is one famous team of same-sex female collaborators, Nancy Ford and Gretchen Cryer), their compositions are produced homosocially (if not homoerotically). Examples of such lengthy "marriages" would include Rodgers and Hart (the former only began looking for another lyricist when Hart became so self-destructive it was harming the "children"); Rodgers and Hammerstein

(Rodgers never found another lyricist with whom he worked well); Bock and Harnick; Kander and Ebb; Lerner and Loewe; and Wright and Forrest (who lived together as both a professional and a personal couple until Forrest's death in 1999).

Musical theatre has been a unique site for queer articulation, particularly for gay males. In fact, it is so much so that gay men are stereotypically associated *with* musical theatre by their love *of* the genre. Koestenbaum says that among his fears of being found out as gay was the

predictive sign: musical comedy. I worried, listening to the records . . . that I would end up gay. . . . I knew about homosexuality only from *Time* feature stories about liberation, but I had a clear impression (picked up where?) that gays liked musical comedy. (11)

It is indicative of the problem of chasing such signifiers that allows Koestenbaum to ask “picked up where?” even as he discusses his awareness, in middle America in the 1950s, that gay males were somehow associated with musical theatre. This chapter particularly concerns itself with outwardly or openly gay characters on the musical stage.¹⁴⁰

Specifically queer ideas will sometimes situate themselves within musicals with no overt (or necessarily even coded) gay/lesbian characters. These ideas usually appear in the lyrics of gay male musical theatre writers such as Cole Porter or Lorenz Hart. In Porter's 1929 *Wake Up and Dream*, the singer of “I'm A Gigolo” tells the audience that “of lavender, my nature's got just a dash in it,” during a period when the color was still a code word for gay (and lesbian). Four years earlier, in Rodgers and Hart's *One Dam* (sic) *Thing After Another*, Hart penned the lyric for “My Heart Stood Still,” which, could well pass for a gay male encounter of the period, with its clever reference to Plato, the

¹⁴⁰ There will be a brief discussion of lesbian characters, but there are very few, relatively speaking.

singer's growing awareness of sexual attraction and identity, and its covert understandings between the lovers.

Through all my school days
I hated boys.
Those April fool days
Brought me loveless joys
I read my Plato.
Love I thought a sin,
But since your kiss
I'm reading Miss Glynn!

I took one look at you.
That's all I meant to do
And then my heart stood still! . . .
Though not a single word was spoken,
I could tell you knew.
That unfelt clasp of hands
Told me so well you knew.

I never lived at all
Until the thrill
Of that moment when
My heart stood still.

The singer/lyricist speaks of originally thinking "love a sin" until she/he kissed a man.

No spoken communication has passed between them, but somehow the singer/lyricist was able to tell that the object of desire "knew" and blooms. This entire sequence of events tells of interpreting signifiers that had to be kept quiet, of living events that could not be spoken at this time.

"Thy Words Are Queer, Sir"¹⁴¹

Because of this strong association between gay males and musical theatre, it is important to address the idea of queer music. As Koestenbaum says of gay composers

¹⁴¹ The lyric line is from "Thou Swell," from Rodgers and Hart's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1927).

and performers, “historically, music has been defined as . . . implicitness rather than explicitness, and so we have hid inside music; in music we can come out without coming out, we can reveal without saying a word” (54). In an attempt to include subaltern groups in the field of music theory, many critics and theorists have attempted to examine gay composers’ work to find clues regarding the composers’ sexuality. Is there such a thing as “gay music?” Many of these theorists have attempted to look at various works and say that—with benefit of hindsight—the composer’s sexuality was shown with harmonic movement that was less traditional or less strong, for example (McClary 77, Hamessley 120). This is essentializing at its most essential. It is also quite dangerous, as it automatically links “feminine” and/or “effeminate” with gay males.¹⁴² Ultimately, it appears to be impossible to “hear” a composer’s sexuality, gender, or nationality in his/her music. What is heard are societally accepted conventions. Copland’s “Americana” sound, for instance, now calls to mind perfectly well music which sounds “American,” but anyone possessing the style of orchestration is able to create a very similar sound.

Musicals and the songs within them offer a different sensibility than other popular music, or than non-musical plays. Because of this, the conversation between queer and musical theatre is being examined more fully these days. It is obvious that certain composers and/or lyricists (in this case, gay males) are attracted to certain kinds of subjects. Lorenz Hart is well-known for the ironic positioning in his love songs; presumably, for a gay man in a heterocentric society, irony becomes a protective, coping measure, as well as allowing him to speak on two levels at once: the straightforward

¹⁴² Apparently, it was only after word of Tchaikovsky’s sexuality came to light that characterizations such as “weak” and “effeminate” were used (McClary “Schubert” 210).

level and that of knowing something about the loci of love songs in America for a gay male. Sondheim has written consistently about the difficulty (or inability) of “connecting,” a word that recurs frequently in his corpus of work, and upon which a great deal of *Sunday in the Park With George* (1984) is predicated. While a case could be made that the sexuality of the lyricists informs the stance(s) within the songs, it is equally true that irony is not the sole property of queer writers, nor is the difficulty of connection between two people the sole province of gay and lesbian Americans.

Ultimately, what seems to inform queer music most overtly is the subject matter, particularly in the minds of the general audience, who do not listen with an academic ear. Since this dissertation deals only with texted music, that is what will be examined within this chapter.

Gays and Lesbians in the Early Twentieth Century

Before World War II, medicine became the only authoritative voice discussing homosexuality, which at least moved it from a sin to a sickness model. Ironically, during the years around World War I, racial segregation paved the way for expression of same-sex knowledge. Even as padlock laws¹⁴³ were closing theatres that dared to present stories concerning gay and lesbian people, so-called “race records” such as Ma Rainey’s “Sissy Man Blues,” and Bessie Smith’s involvement in “buffet flats” (underground bars) were paving the way for at least a word or two on the subject (Adam 43).

¹⁴³ The most famous of these is Jimmy Walker’s 1926 padlock law, which literally padlocked the doors of theatres found to be presenting “offensive” material. Offense was taken at basically every outward portrayal of sexuality, especially sex outside of marriage, homosexuality, and prostitution.

During the 1920s, several gay and lesbian characters would appear on the New York stages in non-musical dramas.¹⁴⁴ All but one caused great furor and offense; the exception was Eugene O'Neill's Charles Marsden in *Strange Interlude*, a character O'Neill intended to be sympathetic. However, the character was so carefully closeted that he was unrecognizable as gay (Curtin 115). Before the Roaring Twenties ever began to put same-sex ideas on the non-musical stage, musical theatre had done so with the character of Madame Lucy in *Irene*. Because this is a musical, however, even Kaier Curtin's work on gay and lesbian characters of this period ignores it. Looking at his work (*We Can Always Call Them Bulgarians*, 1987), it is clear that Madame Lucy predates any queer character in a non-musical play. Not only that, but Lucy is a positive (if stereotypical) character who ends as successful, well-liked, and prosperous, unlike the gay or lesbian characters in most of the non-musical plays.¹⁴⁵ Not only is Lucy signified as gay to the audience, he is obviously considered so by all the onstage characters, who have very few problems with that fact.

"Why didn't you tell me Madame Lucy is a Man?:" Irene's Open Closet

In 1919, shortly after World War I ended, a new musical premiered in New York City. *Irene* had impeccable credentials, with music by Hal Tierney, lyrics by Joseph McCarthy, and a book by James Montgomery. Their musical changed the face of musical theatre at the time, running for 670 performances and breaking the record set in 1891 by *A Trip to Chinatown*; *Irene*'s record would hold until 1943's *Oklahoma!*. Like

¹⁴⁴ This is definitely one time the phrase "straight drama" would not apply.

¹⁴⁵ *The Captive* (Edouard Bourdet, 1926), *Sin of Sins* (William Hurlbut, 1926), and Mae West's *The Drag* (1927) are all far less positive, as the titles of the first two indicate. The last ends with a murder of one male by his lover.

other musical roles examined in this dissertation, Irene made a star out of her portrayer, Edith Day, who opened the musical in London and became so popular a drink was named after her.¹⁴⁶ *Irene* also began what would prove to be a very long line of “Cinderella” musicals, starting with Jerome Kern’s *Sally* (1920, 570 performances), as well as Kern’s *Sunny* (1925, 517 performances). Finally, it gave the world a score that reflected the new jazz sound, as well as an enduring song classic, “Alice Blue Gown.”

The work also gave musical theatre its first portrayal of an openly homosexual male, although unsurprisingly, no attempt is made to put a name to his sexuality. *Irene*’s Madame Lucy is a male dress designer who goes by a female name because no one will patronize a male couturier, and whose work ultimately allows the title character to marry a millionaire. In 1919, Walker’s padlock law was not yet in effect, and Lucy is presented with no apology. It is only later, as times changed, that new explanations were offered to audiences in revivals and film versions. In fact, the film versions nearly dispense entirely with Lucy; he is a minor character in the 1926 silent film, and exists only as a *nom de fashion* in the 1940 version, where the leading man pursues fashion design (under the name Madame Lucy) only as a means to pursue and marry Irene. The 1973 Broadway stage revival was a vehicle for Debbie Reynolds which jettisoned much of the music, added more, and changed Madame Lucy into the long-lost lover of Irene’s mother.¹⁴⁷ The 1976 London revival added even more songs from other composers, but left the Broadway revival’s storyline alone.

¹⁴⁶ The “Edith Day Cocktail” contains gin, grapefruit juice, sugar, and an egg white, to be frapped and served in a champagne flute (BarNone n.p.)

¹⁴⁷ In the collection of vocal selections from this production, every picture of Lucy shows him with his arms around a woman; the one exception to this has him completely surrounded by beautiful young women as he obviously flirts with them all.

The 1949 libretto, which was a revision by the book's author, James Montgomery, contains a page of directions warning that the character "is not written from a 'fairy' standpoint," but is "100 per cent (sic) masculine" (1-4-47). Montgomery then proceeds, as Ellwood Anaheim says, "with his play without changing a word of dialog from the 1919 version" (Anaheim n.p.). The proposed revision did add some scenes, but it is quite evident which ones, as they are rather clumsy updates in the midst of the original play, or suddenly add a forced heterosexual text to the character.¹⁴⁸ The proposed 1949 version manages to keep the character queer even as it attempts to "straighten him up" for the post-war theatrical community. He marries one of his models and fathers a son, although as Anaheim points out, his son sings Judy Garland's "The Trolley Song" while in his cradle at a year's age, and Irene's mother still refers to the now-married couturier as "Nancy."¹⁴⁹

The primary differences in 1949 from the milieu surrounding the original 1919 production lie in the new influences that had come to the fore after World War II. The late 1940s witnessed the beginnings of Joseph McCarthy's hearings against America's enemies; these included Communists and homosexuals. *Newsweek* published an article in 1949 entitled "Queer People," which designated homosexuals as "'sex murderers,' echoing a consistent media theme identifying homosexuals as destroyers of society" (Adam 62).

¹⁴⁸ My thanks to Dr. Anaheim for a copy of his 1949 libretto restored to the 1919 version, as well as a detailed synopsis from Dr. John Degen, which filled in some spots in the script. The pagination changes between acts in the 1949 version.

¹⁴⁹ There is also an extremely interesting pause in this version. At one point, Lucy says "I would marry Jane tomorrow if she'd have me and if I wasn't so . . . (Looks about to be certain no one hears) . . . damn poor." (II-17). Given his self-presentation, even in the "straightened-up" 1949 version, audience members may be forgiven for wondering if he might say something about being homosexual.

Things were not necessarily much better in 1919, but the emergence of a new sexual license in the Jazz Age allowed this version of *Irene* to give expression to a happy and successful gay male. The original *Irene* begins at the Long Island mansion of Donald Marshall. As he works quietly, away from the party inside the house, his friend Bob Harrison asks him a favor. While Harrison was in France a year before, he did some business with a fashion designer named Madame Lucy, who has recently come to America but lacks the resources to advertise tastefully; with one or two society women wearing his clothing designs to parties. Donald does not know any women, a signifier in itself (particularly when coupled with his evident discomfort around Lucy). It seems as if the matter is closed until the arrival of a shopgirl, Irene O'Dare, to repair some sofa cushions. Donald is obviously interested in her, and eventually hatches the scheme to dress Irene in Lucy's gowns, passing her off as a society woman. Irene eventually agrees, and with the aid of two friends from her tenement, all three wear Lucy's clothing. She is eventually unmasked, but by then it is too late: the women all love the clothes and Donald has proposed marriage.

The work is full of secrets. The opening chorus is sung by a group of professors. They tell the audience, as part of the song "Genealogy," that they can alter anyone's family members into ones worthy of family lineage, thus setting the tone for the evening: very few of the characters will be who they pretend to be. The subversion within this set-up is relatively obvious; any minority audience members with any secrets they cannot make public—particularly that of nonhegemonic sexuality—will see someone with whom to identify *Irene*. Not only that, but the sexually subaltern character(s) end well. Donald is surprised to learn that Madame Lucy is a man, and Lucy has to teach his

models how to act like society women. Irene keeps her new job a secret from her mother, Mrs. O'Dare, because the latter is unhappy with the way rich men behave and would not approve. There is yet one more major character, J.P. Beauden, a member of the *nouveau riche* who is only interested in those who can help him become a part of society. He is the first to propose to Irene, but backs out immediately after finding she is not rich.

There is also one important moment when Irene, who is introduced as “a straight girl” during her introductory description, tells Donald the story of her brush with nonheteronormativity. She took a job in the city and was paid just enough to slowly starve to death, until she ran into an old friend of hers.

Oh, she looked beautiful and she was awful glad to see me and wanted to know what I was doing and all that, and I told her. ‘Come with me,’ she said and wouldn’t take no for an answer. . . . [W]e drove to a wonderful apartment. When we got upstairs I couldn’t believe it, six or seven rooms, lovely furniture and rugs and closets full of clothes, and hats and shoes. Then she ordered dinner. . . . Then a gentleman friend of her’s (sic) called and right away he paid a lot of attention to me, wasn’t that funny, I guess she didn’t like that very much so she made him telephone for a friend of his. (1-2-26).

The old friend of Irene’s is obviously being kept by a gentleman; she tells Irene after their wonderful evening on the town that “‘you’re a damn fool to work, stay here and I’ll fix it for you,’ and I kept saying to myself: ‘Will I or won’t I, will I or won’t I.’” (1-2-26).

Even more interesting is the fact that when Irene stays one more night, the unnamed friend gives her the Alice blue dress that will provide the subject of the musical’s most enduring song hit. In other words, Irene’s brush with being kept as a mistress provides one of musical theatre’s best-loved songs of innocence.

It is Lucy, of course, who is the least heteronormative character in *Irene*. It is important to note that, even after people find out the truth about Lucy, they all continue to

call him “Lucy,” and use feminine pronouns when referring to him. Even when it is to his face, Lucy is never offended and never corrects anyone. This despite Harrison’s claims that “Madame is just a trade name. He’s a swell feller” (1-4-46). Harrison then immediately returns to “she” and “her” in referring to Lucy. When Donald first tries to speak to him, he says “Madame – er – I – I” (1-4-47); he has no male name within the confines of this musical; the script never intimates anything else, either. Conspicuously, however, Harrison uses “he” when, horrified at the lower-class women picked to be models with Irene, he asks “They’ve got to be the real thing, the real thing. Does Madame Lucy believe he can make them look like anything?” (1-4-58). And yet the distinctions are blurred when Harrison himself cannot recognize the “real thing” as Irene enters: “Now that’s what I mean by the real thing, can’t you see the difference?” (sic) (1-4-60). In fact, “reality” is hopelessly muddled in portions of the script. The musical is not just about Irene, a lovely young woman. It is also about levels of acting and performance, particularly the presentation of socially accepted norms. The couturier is able to avoid much of this because he is in a “feminine” profession and therefore, his behavior is acceptable within his own realm.

Lucy himself is described in Montgomery’s 1949 revision as

a young man of about 28-30 years old – of the nationality of the actor who plays the part. This man is 100 per cent (sic) masculine. Don’t forget this for a moment. It is not written from a ‘fairy’ viewpoint and when played that way, he gets about 50 per cent (sic) of the laughs coming to him. . . . He is funny because he is a man talking a woman’s dialogue. Also bear in mind he is serious – he is as he says – an ‘Artist.’ (1-4-46—1-4-47).

Of course Lucy is not funny if he is overtly acknowledged as a gay male; doing so would simply confirm sexual anxieties within the audience. If not acknowledged, there can be the tacit acceptance inherent within silence; this acceptance is truly subversive.

When Bob Harrison first discusses Madame Lucy's designs with Donald, the latter (as yet ignorant of Lucy's biological gender) suggests that Lucy has followed Bob to America. Bob's response is slightly panicked.

No – no – no – get that out of your head – she was here on business. . . .
[S]he needed everything – machines – material – Feeling a sense of responsibility for her being over here – I billed her a lot of stuff – She'd pay me if she could but she hasn't got it. (1-2-12)

When Donald asks if she makes men's clothing, Harrison "dismisses that with a gesture" and says "Yesterday I thought of your sister – she goes everywhere – that's the secret of the business" (1-2-12). Given the presentation/reality binaries inherent in the majority of the characters, this is not the *only* secret of the business. In fact, Lucy's entire occupation is predicated upon a man pretending to be a woman, and Harrison does not share this with Donald.

Later, when Donald reproaches him for not revealing Madame Lucy's real gender, Harrison responds with "I didn't think you would be interested. I certainly didn't expect you to call on her. What happened?" He emphasizes "WHY [sic] did you call on her?" (1-4-45—1-4-46). There is an interesting undercurrent running through this conversation. Harrison is upset that Donald visited Lucy; could he be keeping the secret of his (Harrison's) own sexuality? The line "I didn't think you would be interested" might be construed as pertaining to sexual interest and "What happened?" could easily be a demand to know about actions resulting from that (sexual) interest.

The two—Donald and Harrison—continue to react with some form of homosexual panic. When told of the plan to find models, Lucy rises and says only "Oh, Mr. Marshall." Donald "backs away," saying "don't thank me." Shortly afterward, when Lucy says "I must let you know how grateful I am," Donald replies simply "I'll take your

word for it.” (1-4-19). Given the earlier conversation, and the fact that Donald makes it clear he knows no women, it is possible to conjecture that the two are nervous about something in themselves. It is even possible to imagine that they are in the midst of what Eve Sedgwick calls “homosocial triangulation,” wherein two men will interact with each other over the body of a woman both desire in some fashion. In this case, the two are interacting over the body of a man called by a woman’s name, which seems momentous for the concept of queering inherent within this musical.

Despite Donald’s nervousness, he genuinely attempts to help Lucy. Not only does he find models, but he lectures him in a curious conversation about giving money to others. Lucy has given away a great deal of money at different times, and always to men. The reasons he gives could easily be excuses, with the men being some type of gigolos or gold diggers. Officially, one was going to open a nightclub, although Lucy never knew just where the club was located. Another was given money to develop a substitute for gasoline (the latter was obviously inserted for the 1949 revival; the original presumably mentioned something equally silly). While there is no other hint throughout the musical, it is also possible that Lucy is being blackmailed by a former sexual partner or someone who knows his (sexual) secret. Regardless of the reasons behind it, Donald tells Lucy that this giving money away must stop (1-4-49). This is presumably as much because Donald objects to the loss of money as because Lucy’s identity has already begun to be public knowledge, rendering blackmail useless. Simultaneously, the payment of blackmail may make the knowledge of Lucy’s sexuality *too* public.

Lucy and Irene rarely interact onstage. Presumably she is his favorite model; she requires far less training to act the part of a society woman than do the other two models,

and the stage directions describing Irene's first Madame Lucy dress imply strongly that her outfit is the best of the three. The most interesting relationship(s) in the musical is that between Lucy and his two models (excluding Irene), Jane and Helen. He insults them and is blatantly honest regarding their shortcomings, but he still treats them better than do the rest of the men in the musical. At one point, he tells Helen she is so stupid that she might appear profound (II-57), yet this is, in its own way, a positive statement; he never gives up on her or fires her. In fact, just as he continues to make both women look better, he works with them to teach them manners and refinement. Meanwhile, Harrison dismisses Helen and Jane as "little tramps" when he meets them. In the case of *Irene*, it is a gay male who treats the women honestly, objectively, and does not objectify them, while the heterosexual men onstage do.

It is extraordinary that this work so strongly portrays gender as performance. Not only is Lucy a biological male, but it is the male who teaches the women to act femininely. Of course, a portion of this instruction (highlighted in the song "Point Your Toe") must spring from Lucy's expertise at acting societal roles that do not match his true persona: heterosexual *or* female.

During the first scene between Lucy and his models, the two women exhibit a curious mixture of awareness and naiveté regarding Lucy's sexuality. At one point, he asks to see their legs and they begin to exit angrily. He reassures them with "It's my profession." Helen asks Jane "Who does he think he's kidding?" (1-4-55). As this scene begins, the two models laugh upon meeting Madame Lucy. The stage directions tell us that it is a "very short laugh. Lucy walks right – he doesn't like to be laughed at" (1-4-52). As the scene progresses, he teaches them to walk "with dignity," and by implication,

like well-born ladies; he does so by simple example. The women “don’t know whether to laugh or what to do.” After he demonstrates how to walk, he exclaims loudly, “That is walking!,” and the two respond “Yes, ma’am” and “Yes, sir” in order (1-4-54). Still, when he puts his hands on Helens hips to help her walk, she responds as if to a heterosexual man who is taking advantage: “As if you didn’t know.”¹⁵⁰ The song “Point Your Toe” follows, in which he finishes teaching them to walk like models (and by implication, women). “If your ambition is to gain permission / To the unintruded set secluded / One must have great care” (1-4-57). This concerns more than simply their scheme; for a gay male such as Lucy to gain entrance to (or remain in) 1919 society, he must also “have great care.”

Indeed, for Lucy to remain in high society, he must “pass” at some level. In fact, a majority of his attempts at passing are masquerading as a woman in order to be a couturier, yet he never attempts to actually be a woman. He presents himself as very male; certainly the playwright insists on his masculinity. Yet he also never actually passes, in one sense. As he becomes successful, it would be possible to hire a woman to impersonate the corporate Madame Lucy; on the other hand, success brings with it its own ability to survive. Lucy performs a certain amount of heteronormativity, but does not hide his true self: when asked, he is quite upfront about his creating the clothing. Just as queering can blur lines between binaries, so too can passing: it “questions the commonly held assumption that visibility is necessarily positive, pleasurable, even desirable” (Schlossberg 2).

¹⁵⁰ Interestingly, Lucy “does not care” for the intimation of heterosexuality, immediately removes his hands from her hips and “backs off” (1-4-55).

By Act II, the secret of Madame Lucy's identity is out, although not that of the models. By being successful, Lucy has managed to subvert societal conventions and expectations and is being "himself" by being Madame Lucy in public. Noticeably, however, it is the women who have no problem with his reality. Donald and Bob still act nervous in his company. "I was down to my last paper of pins, when these two good looking boys took me under their wing," declares Lucy, but is immediately countered by Donald with "Thank Bob" (II-18).

To celebrate their success, Lucy, Helen, and Jane all sing "We're Getting Away With It," a song which covers much ground. Again, they—particularly Lucy—are passing. In this case, they are experiencing the act of passing as "a uniquely pleasurable experience, one that trades on the erotics of secrecy and revelation" (Schlossberg 3).

The wisest man in Jericho made a remark we very well know:
It's clothes that make the man.

Including the ladies, I suppose, for who could be ladies without their
clothes?

Though birds of a feather will flock together, it's easy to fool the best;
We place all the feathers upon the birds who will now lead the rest.

We're getting away with it! Yes, we're getting away with it!
The secret lay with two, then three who really knew.
Now there's five of us who know; watch our little secret grow.
And we're getting away with it! By and by there'll be a fearful blow.
To prove we had the right idea, we had to be good or we wouldn't be here,
And we're getting away with it—whoops! they'll never know. (Degen 5).

"Who could be ladies without their clothes?" is a reasonable question for a women's fashion designer who designates himself Madame Lucy. He certainly could not be Madame Lucy without women's clothes, even if he does not actually wear them. More interesting is the question of what exactly they are "getting away with." It is, on a fundamental level, not just the deception regarding the models, and not only that Madame

Lucy is a man (since the society women who have bought dresses from him know the secret), but also Lucy's queer identity. It seems as if he believes that the "fearful blow" will be more in response to that identity than to the revelation of the designer's gender. Finally, the "whoops!" in the final line is not particularly "masculine" in tone. There exists a recording of portions of the 1920 London cast recording which includes this song¹⁵¹ (Presumably this recording is not only representative of what occurred on the London stage, but of the American production as well). In this recording, the "whoops" is definitely not stereotypically "masculine." In general, the song casts a long shadow regarding Lucy's sexuality, and his need to pass.

While the men who know Lucy may appear nervous at times, there is no question of barring him from parties, or actually worrying at length over his sexuality. The only woman who does not immediately take to him is Irene's mother, who evinces suspicion throughout the musical of her daughter's new circle. Upon finding that Irene is at a society party, Mrs. O'Dare bursts in wearing a Madame Lucy original that Irene has given her. As the truths come tumbling out, she is introduced to Madame Lucy. Mrs. O'Dare's immediate reaction to him is "Saints preserve us!" The gown is intended to look odd on her, and Lucy sets to work to repair the damage. When she asks what he is doing, he replies "I made this gown." Her response is "Well, even if you did you ought to be ashamed to admit it. Get out – Irene, what sort of man is this?" (II-35).

The songs of *Irene* reflect the influence of the newest musical trend of the era, jazz. It would be impossible to advocate the idea that this is somehow specifically connected to the character of Lucy, but *Irene* is among the first musicals to adopt the new sound, which would ultimately sweep the nation. Energetic, lively, faster, syncopated,

¹⁵¹ Lucy's "whoops" remind me of nothing so much as Albin's similar outbursts in *La Cage Aux Folles*.

and with unexpected harmonies, the genre would become inextricably associated with musical theatre during the 1920s and later.

Jazz and queerness are today consistently seen as quite apart from each other, generally speaking, as the musical genre is seen as incontrovertibly “straight.” “The myth is a hangover from the heyday of bebop fifty years ago, when the image of the jazz musician as Romantic outsider . . . was first established” (Gill 48). Yet as Barry Adam establishes in *The Rise and Fall of a Gay and Lesbian Movement*, it was precisely in the recordings and performance venues of the African-American jazz singers of the teens and 1920s that queer signifiers bypassed the white authorities, who ignored or misunderstood their messages (43). Jazz actually has a certain kinship with notions of queerness, with the idea that performance is a fluid, creative procedure, loosening the strictures that historically made up performances, and allowing for “wrong” notes to become part of the music.

Interestingly, the music of the composer Frederic Chopin appears prominently in all the versions of *Irene*. Lyricist Joseph McCarthy must have loved Chopin’s music. Normally, one would imagine that the melody for “Castle of Dreams” must have been stolen from Chopin’s “Minute Waltz” by the composer, Harry Tierney. However, a song from the musical *Oh, Look!*, written a year before *Irene*, also contained a song with a lyric by McCarthy and ascribed to composer Harry Carroll. It, too, has a melody from the Polish composer. “I’m Always Chasing Rainbows” sold over a million copies of sheet music and has a melody taken from the second section of Chopin’s *Fantasia Impromptu in C# Minor*. The latter song was interpolated into the 1973 New York revival of *Irene*, even as “Castle of Dreams” was dropped from that production. Neither

song was ever sung by Madame Lucy (both were performed by Irene herself), but the association of Chopin and his music with otherworldliness, as well as with subaltern sexuality, makes for an interesting pairing of lyricist McCarthy with what is probably the first American theatre piece to portray a gay male.¹⁵²

During the musical's final scene, during the traditional pairings off, Lucy is placed with his two models. Other versions of the story have, as was mentioned above, paired off Lucy romantically with either Jane or Mrs. O'Dare, but the original play places him with his models, all three of them successful, dancing and singing with the rest of the cast, as part of the onstage community. The medical model for sexuality was thrown out in *Irene*; what matters for the purposes of this musical is that Lucy is good at his job. There is nervousness for some characters, but no one assumes he is ill or that he does not belong in their community. Many are proud to know him; several owe their success to him.¹⁵³ However, much remained to be done: there was no overt mention of sexuality for Lucy, nor was he given a love life (or even interest in other men).

Homosexuality in the 1930s and 1940s

The 1930s saw more than one wave of panic sweep through the United States regarding "sexual criminals." This group included homosexual men, and they were sentenced to lengthy, "sometimes unlimited," prison sentences (Adam 47-48). Despite the cultural fears surrounding the subject, the stage opened up a bit, with the wildly successful 1934 production of Lillian Hellman's *The Children's Hour*, and other

¹⁵² I can find no discussion of the sexuality of McCarthy, nor of his composers for these two musicals.

¹⁵³ It is extraordinarily ironic that the 1973 revival, staged during a period of increasingly positive visibility for gay males, took great pains to rewrite Lucy as Mrs. O'Dare's long-lost love, and to pair the two by the final curtain.

productions such as *The Green Bay Tree* (Shairp, 1933), and Noel Coward's *Design for Living* (1933). Of the three, only the last could be said to end happily; in other words, while successful theatre works could portray gay or lesbian characters, such characters had to end badly. Kaier Curtin lists the ends of the era's lesbian and gay stage characters, beginning with the former group:

One was forced into prostitution; three were driven to suicide; two were abandoned by the heterosexual object of their affection; one succumbed to a heart attack. Gay male characters fared somewhat better. While two were murdered, one driven mad, two driven to drugs, and another to alcohol, the gay confidant ended up with the leading lady in *Strange Interlude*; a pair of traveling companions went their merry bisexual way in *Design For Living*, and a gay good samaritan continued to enjoy Debussy in *Reprise*. (224)

What Curtin neglects to add to this summation is that audiences never guessed Charles Marsden's (the "gay confidant," above) sexuality; this is not to mention that for a gay man to ring down the curtain paired with the heterosexual leading lady is not particularly cheering. The "gay good samaritan" sits listening to his recordings as the man he loves plunges to his suicidal death. In fact, *Design For Living* does end happily, with the primary trio of characters finding a way to live together; again, however, the two men have often been seen as platonic friends, both in love with Gilda rather than as two sides of an equilateral triangle. Into such a difficult era came *Lady in the Dark*, an exceptional musical for daring to suggest not only that its gay male character was happy, but that he had a love life, and was successful in his chosen field, completely subverting his image as sick and/or criminal by avoiding his expected tragic end.

Lady in the Dark: “I Have No Queer Twists”

Kurt Weill was born in Dessau, Germany in 1900. He began studying composition with Ferruccio Busoni as a young man, and attracted the notice of Bertolt Brecht when he set some of Brecht’s poems to music, resulting in the *Mahagonny Songspiel* (1927). Brecht was impressed with the composer’s work and the two began collaborating (although Weill worked with Georg Kaiser during this period, as well). Weill and Brecht produced *Die Dreigroschenoper* (1928), *Der Lindberghflug* (1929), and *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* (1930), among others. As the Nazis rose to power and implemented more and more stringent censorship measures, Weill and his wife, Lotte Lenya, fled first to Paris and eventually to America. While in America, he worked with such notable theatrical luminaries as Paul Green (*Johnny Johnson*, 1936), Maxwell Anderson (*Knickerbocker Holiday*, 1938; *Lost in the Stars*, 1949), Elmer Rice and Langston Hughes (*Street Scene*, 1946), and Alan Jay Lerner (*Love Life*, 1947).

There has rarely been a composer who has changed his style so strikingly over the years (although Richard Rodgers changed his sound radically when he stopped working with Lorenz Hart and began collaborating with Oscar Hammerstein). Weill often utilized both jazz and relatively dissonant harmonies. In particular, his stage works all explore a median position between opera and musical theatre. Weill embraced stylistic pluralism long before it became fashionable to do so. Logically, as well, the works were composed in different countries under different conditions and for different audiences.

Weill also created a theory of “gestic” music, which he would continue to use throughout his life. “Gestic” music is that which transforms dramatic feeling and characters into an almost archetypal physical realization that can be reproduced. It was a

simplification of the means with which one could musically express reality. In other words, there were certain musical ideas which exactly define the dramatic elements of a piece; rhythm or shape is the way into characters and their music.

The idea for *Lady in the Dark* came from Moss Hart, who would write the book; he believed that there was good material for a play in psychiatry and began writing a non-musical work himself. As he went on, he realized that music was perhaps called for, particularly within extended sequences, and spoke with Weill about collaborating (Furia 159). Ira Gershwin provided the lyrics.¹⁵⁴ Opening in 1940, three years before *Oklahoma!*, the creators realized that an unconventional storyline called for an unconventional form.¹⁵⁵ The work broke with tradition in many ways. There is no overture, and only one song occurs outside of the three extended dream sequences;¹⁵⁶ that one is an elusive, recurring childhood memory which begins each dream sequence. It proves to be the cure for Liza's mental difficulties.

Lady in the Dark was extremely successful. It ran for 467 performances, sold sheet music and recordings of the songs quite well, and Paramount Pictures "paid the highest sum ever heard of—283,000 dollars—for the film rights" (Taylor 259). The film starred Ginger Rogers and did well, although for some odd reason, many songs were cut

¹⁵⁴ Gershwin's contribution is interesting; he and his brother George wrote *Pardon My English* in 1932. The work ran 43 performances but was not their best work. It contained songs entitled "Freud and Jung and Adler," sung by a group of psychiatrists, and "He's Oversexed," their diagnosis of the hero's troubles. It is clear that Ira did not take psychoanalysis seriously (Furia).

¹⁵⁵ There is, in fact, a dispute as to *Oklahoma!*'s place as the beginning of the "integrated" musical when this work opened three years earlier. The placement of songs only within dreams predates the film of *Cabaret* by a great many years. Without a doubt, while Rodgers and Hammerstein popularized the dream ballet, it received perhaps its fullest treatment ever in *Lady in the Dark*.

¹⁵⁶ There was originally a fourth dream sequence planned, which would have been a fantasy of Liza's life after she married Randy Curtis, a movie star (Sanders 298). It would have been interesting to see how the gay character was translated to Hollywood, particularly in 1940, after the Hays Commission was in operation.

(including “My Ship,” the childhood song which holds the key to Liza’s recovery) while songs by composers other than Weill were added.

The story begins with Liza Elliott, managing editor of *Allure*, a fashion magazine; she is visiting a psychiatrist because she is “in a constant state of terror and anxiety” (83). She does not particularly believe in psychiatry and besides, “there’s nothing strange in my life. I have no queer twists” (82), although she then tells him that she is living with Kendall Nesbitt, *Allure*’s married publisher, whose his wife will not give him a divorce. Dr. Brooks suggests they start immediately, and the first thing that Liza remembers, when asked to speak of anything, is a “little song I knew as a child” (85). It has recurred to her during her worst moments, but she cannot remember the words. Instead, she begins to tell Dr. Brooks about a dream she recently had; each of her dreams will feature people from her present life. In the first, “The Glamour Dream,” her maid is played by the same actress who plays her secretary and her chauffeur is played by Russell Paxton, *Allure*’s photographer. A large group of men in tuxedos serenades her and packages arrive constantly from admirers. Men from all over the world wish to dedicate their works of art to her, including Huxley and Stravinsky. Eventually, she rides to a nightclub, but stops on the way to make a speech, in which she tells the assemblage they’ve “only one life to live” (93). At the nightclub, the headwaiter is played by her lover, Kendall Nesbitt, and a painter is played by Charley Johnson (*Allure*’s advertising manager). The artist asks to paint her for a new two-cent stamp. When unveiled, it is not the glamorous Liza of the dream, but the severe and forbidding one in the psychiatrist’s office. The dream ends. Back in Dr. Brooks’ office, he suggests that it is curious that the editor of a

fashion magazine dresses so severely, and that in her dream she dressed like one of the models.

Back at her office, the audience meets the “real-life” counterparts of Liza’s dream characters. *Allure* is a busy place. Liza’s best friend, Maggie Grant, asks how the doctor’s visit went; Liza is cautiously optimistic. Others in the office appear, including Alison Du Bois (played originally by Natalie Schafer), Russell Paxton, the photographer (played by Danny Kaye), and Charley Johnson. The office is in an uproar over the appearance of a movie star, Randy Curtis (originally played by Victor Mature). As things settle down, it turns out that Liza threw a paperweight at Charley the day before. Eventually, Kendall Nesbitt arrives with good news: his wife has agreed to divorce him so he and Liza can finally marry. Liza seems shaken by the news and, sending everyone away, lies down to nap.

“The Wedding Dream” begins as a flashback, with a group of recent graduates remembering Liza. They announce that she is to marry Kendall Nesbitt that day. The ring salesman is Charley Johnson, who hands her a small gold dagger instead of the ring she has chosen. Meanwhile, Randy Curtis appears and serenades Liza. Eventually, she leaves the movie star to dance with Charley. As the chorus and Dr. Brooks begin to echo each other, Liza remembers a school play from her childhood, “The Princess of Pure Delight.” In it, a young princess must choose between three princes; the one who answers a riddle will marry her. Again, the scene moves back to Liza’s wedding, as the dream becomes more grotesque and frightening. As the dream version of Charley performs the ceremony marrying Liza and Kendall, the chorus reminds her that she does not love Kendall, and the dream ends with a nightmarish cacophony.

Maggie, meanwhile, has gone to see Dr. Brooks, who tells her to be hopeful. Maggie ducks out the back way as Liza enters. As the two talk, the doctor suggests that Liza might be afraid of competing with other women, which angers her. She leaves, telling him she will never return. Back at the office, the staff is worried about Liza, who tells Kendall she does not want to marry him. Meanwhile, Charley resigns; he wants to be general editor and knows he cannot with Liza at the helm. Angry at the way things are going, Liza accepts a dinner date with Randy and pulls clothing off a modeling dummy, making herself glamorous as Act I ends.

Act II begins with “The Circus Dream,” in which voices reproach Liza. In a tribute to Gilbert and Sullivan, the circus becomes a courtroom; Liza is on trial for not making up her mind. The Ringmaster is played by Russell Paxton, the Bareback Rider/Defense Attorney is Randy, the Trapeze Artist/Prosecutor is Charley, and Kendall is the Lion Tamer/Witness. The argument in Liza’s favor is that she gave Kendall her heart, but not her promise to marry him. As her final defense, she sings “The Saga of Jenny,” about a woman who continually gets into trouble because she *does* make up her mind. Afterward, the music for Liza’s childhood song reappears, frightening her so much she awakes.

Liza returns to Dr. Brooks’ office, where she tells of her childhood. Her mother was a great beauty and her parents repeatedly told her she was plain. At her high school prom, she is seen to be obviously fond of Ben, who asks her to sing the song she is humming. For the first time, the audience hears “My Ship,” the song that has been occurring in snatches throughout the evening. Afterward, she finds that Ben has made up with his girlfriend and forgotten her. Dr. Brooks sums it all up for her:

A little girl, convinced of her own ugliness, rejects herself as not as good as other little girls. . . . Then you blossomed as yourself until once again—and at a most crucial moment—a beautiful woman robs you. I think, then, that you withdrew as a woman (151).

A week later, it is obvious that Liza has been dating Randy; she enjoys his company until she finds that he wants her to act as a mother figure as much as a wife. She tells Kendall and Randy goodbye, and accepts Charley's challenge to go to dinner with him, offering him co-editorship, with the idea that she might even step aside one day. Charley begins to suggest changes, and as the show ends, the two find they both know "My Ship," and sing it together as the curtain descends.

Lady in the Dark has never had a major, extended revival; there are several obstacles for such a production. The musical was fashioned around a magnetic star (Gertrude Lawrence), psychoanalysis was far less well known to audiences in 1940 (and therefore the ease of diagnosis and cure can be unintentionally funny to today's audience), and the sexist implications within the work are often staggering.¹⁵⁷ Each of these objections can be met with, but it is a formidable set, taken together.

Lady in the Dark breaks free of heteronormativity in more ways than one. Liza may tell the doctor "there are no queer twists" to her, but her life is anything but traditional. During the first scene, it seems evident to the audience that this woman has repressed her sexuality a great deal, and it will become clearer and clearer that she has done so. Yet she lives with a man who is married to another woman, startlingly unconventional for the American musical stage in 1940. She surrounds herself with

¹⁵⁷ Not only does Eliza withdraw from competition with other women by moving away from traditional norms of beauty, but she rejects Randy because he is not the strong man she expects, and she accepts Charley, who has spent the entire musical pinching models and offering to give Maggie a "wet kiss" (152). And, of course, the idea of a working woman goes hand in hand with her lack of femininity.

outlandish characters such as Alison Du Bois and Russell Paxton. And she is surrounded by a relatively large group of men in whom she shows some type of romantic interest.¹⁵⁸

There is one exception to this group of men. As Geoffrey Block points out, “although some mystery will remain as to which of Liza’s suitors will eventually win out, Paxton is removed at the outset as a romantic possibility” (154). When Russell himself is introduced to the audience, there is no doubt left by Hart that he intended the photographer to be gay. The stage directions state that Russell is “the Cecil Beaton of *Allure*,” itself something of a signifier; Beaton’s homosexuality was an open secret through most of his life. Russell “is still in his early twenties, but very Old World in manner and mildly effeminate in a rather charming fashion.” His first speech is “hysterical, as usual,” as he enthuses about Randy Curtis’ looks: “Girls, he’s God-like! I’ve taken pictures of beautiful men, but this one is the end—the *end*! He’s got a face that would melt in your mouth. . . . He’s heaven” (103).

When Randy appears, ready to be photographed for *Allure*, Russell becomes a stereotypical queen, fawning over the movie star “as though he were pronouncing a benediction” (104). When Charley Johnson mocks them both by pretending wide-eyed innocence in asking for an autograph, it is Russell who responds with (ineffectual) fury: “*Really!* . . . Pay no attention to this one—he’s just *too* funny for words! *Really!*” (105) (emphasis Hart’s).

Outside of the dream sequences, Russell appears twice more. The next scene in Liza’s office involves most of her staff (Maggie, Russell, and Alison) waiting for her. It

¹⁵⁸ It is possible to read Liza as lesbian during her first scenes. The signifiers include lack of make-up, a “severely tailored business suit,” and no jewelry. She has never been married, nor have any of her closest female associates, and Maggie Grant feels so close to—and protective of—her that the former visits Dr.

is this scene that displays most of the stereotypes associated with homosexuality.

However, each is presented with a positive spin, if not actually undercut as a stereotype.

Russell is quick-witted, but starts the scene as catty and spiteful. When told he is not helping with the situation, he asks, “What do you want me to do, dear? Weep quietly?” (122). With no delay, he tells Alison that her new perfume, “Northwest Mounted,” will get her a horse rather than a man. He is also presented as somewhat gossipy, as he already knows that Liza has been seeing a psychiatrist, and that Maggie went to see him, as well. “I have my own little Gestapo” (122). Yet he obviously likes both women, as they do him. He gives them advice and is clearly concerned about Liza.

This scene approaches the concept of drag, as well. Russell is “sprawled full length on the couch, a lady’s evening cape thrown across him as a coverlet, a rather outrageous lady’s hat over his face” (121). In other words, not only is he “artistic” as a photographer, but he verges on drag at this moment. When Maggie reproaches him and asks him to “take that silly-looking thing” off his face, it is presumably directed as much at the hat itself as it is a reaction to his wearing it; after all, it is termed “outrageous” in the stage directions.

Moments leading toward the idea of drag appears twice more, albeit more as signified than signifier, reversing the traditional order. Later during this same scene, Russell is preparing to shoot some photos with four models and a suit of armor. After staring at the suit, he asks an assistant to “hold these goddamn doves. I’m going to make Elmer pretty,” and “begins, with great concentration, to drape the chiffon over the suit of armor,” placing a dove on each shoulder for the final touch (126). After the picture is

Brooks to vent her worries and make sure he is legitimate. The fact that she has never had a successful/conventional relationship adds to the mix.

taken, Russell tells his assistants to “Take Erroll Flynn down to the studio” (126). The reference is not just to an actor who was often in period films, but one who was reputed to have slept with a vast segment of the population of Hollywood (both male and female). These scenes could be read as moving directly into the stereotype of gays performing drag, or, since the drag is never full-fledged, as deconstructing the binaries of male/female. Since drag has long been a staple of both theatre itself, and musical theatre as a theatrical subset, it would not have been difficult for the creators of *Lady in the Dark* to have dealt with it “fully,” had they wished. Instead, I believe they present a continuum of masculinity and femininity. In neither of the above cases is there an attempt to pass the male off as female, but rather, to bend the idea of masculinity. Madame Lucy bends the notion of gender a bit, but much of the humor within the libretto stems from the assumed ridiculousness of a man in a “woman’s” profession. That style of humor has been left far behind by 1949. In fact, so has the easier humor of simple male drag, cast off in favor of muddying the waters of gender in a manner similar to that set by Lucy.

The obverse holds true within the body of *Lady in the Dark*, as well. Boze Hadleigh established the idea of “honorary drag” (175), the concept of a woman becoming hyperfeminine to the point of grotesquerie—in other words, a biological female dressing as a drag queen might. Hadleigh’s examples include Norma Desmond (herself the subject of a recent stage musical) and Cruella De Ville, but I would include such musical theatre icons as Dolly Levi, Mame Dennis, and Nurse Apple in *Anyone Can Whistle* (1964).¹⁵⁹ I would also include Liza in *Lady in the Dark*, at the end of Act I. When Randy Curtis arrives to pick Liza up for dinner, she has forgotten they have a date

¹⁵⁹ Nurse Apple is frigid and can only function sexually when she dons a red wig and provocative sequined gown, becoming the amorous (and anonymous) “Lady From Lourdes.”

and has not changed her daytime clothes. Even though he is wearing a tuxedo, he is relieved: “Let’s go out just as you are. I’ll stop back at the hotel on the way and change— . . . I was afraid I’d run into a glamour girl tonight. . . . I’m up to my hips in glamour most of the time” (129). She asks for five minutes and

rips off her dress and tosses it on the floor. Crossing the room she kicks off her shoes. . . . She goes straight to the dummy and takes off the dress [a formal evening gown] and flings it on. From the other dummy she takes the evening cape and shoes. She runs to the mirror on the other side of the room, undoing the knot of her hair as she crosses. In front of the mirror she begins to fluff out her hair—half singing, half sobbing that phrase of song. (130)

Alison, who is also at the club where the couple go dancing, barely recognizes her boss. “You looked divine and he’s such a dreamboat that I almost couldn’t believe it when I turned around” (131). Again, the dichotomy between what is “feminine” and what is “masculine” is being commented upon, although by the end of the musical, it is clear that the authors favor the feminine.

The dreams queer reality (and realism) even further. They are completely sung, sometimes in operatic recitative.¹⁶⁰ The musical playbill asked what was “more natural than that the dreams be conveyed by music and lyrics so that the plane of reality and that of the dreams would be distinct?” (qtd in Sanders 294). However, within these dreams certain realities from Liza’s everyday life remain constant. Interestingly, Charley Johnson, the man with whom Liza will eventually end up, is “firmly grounded in reality” and never sings (Block *Evenings* 149). He is thereby set off from the rest of the unreal, “queer” characters who follow dream logic and sing onstage. His dream appearances are also the most stereotypically “masculine;” he appears as a marine, a salesman, and a trapeze artist. Randy Curtis barely sings at all; following the logic of Charley’s non-

singing role, this would be because he appears until the last scene to be the perfect man for her.¹⁶¹

Russell, on the other hand, sings often, and his dream characters are perfectly in keeping with the stereotypes brought forth in the non-dream sections of the musical. In “The Glamour Dream,” his first appearance in the musical, Russell plays Beekman, Liza’s chauffeur. He enters dressed entirely in yellow, changing to blue when he “learned it would be blue tonight.” During the first portion of the dream, Beekman is the only male in a particularly bright color, and he has to be informed what the color scheme for the evening is, as opposed to simply being one of the hegemonic group “in the know” as to what the color for the day is.

He is also the “artistic” one in the group. As Beekman and the butler sing “When in silks our Liza goes / Then, then, methinks how sweetly flows / The liquefaction of her clothes,” it is Beekman (Russell) who knows that the lines are from “a delicate poem by Herrick,” but he “must be off to perfume the gasoline” (89). Not only does the gay character know poetry, but it falls to him to perform the task of making the masculine (smell) feminine. Finally, there is a distinct reference to Beekman/Russell’s looking at his wristwatch. As late as the early 1930s, it was still considered effeminate in some circles for a man to wear a wristwatch. While this had apparently relaxed a great deal by 1940, the memories of such an idea would be strong in many audience members’ minds.

“The Wedding Dream,” dealing as it does with a heteronormative situation at its most basic, contains little of note for the queer Other to do; in fact Russell *has* little to do in this dream. He appears only to lead the group in dressing Liza as a bride: again, the

¹⁶⁰ In fact, Weill’s intent was to have three “little one-act operas” within the work as a whole (Sanders 298).

references are somewhat stereotypical, with Russell knowing about fashion and how to dress a woman. On the other hand, as the primary photographer for a major fashion magazine, it is not unlikely that he would best know how the wedding dress suits her. Liza does refer to him in her song, “The Princess of Pure Delight.” The song couches Eliza’s dilemma as a fairy tale, and begins by introducing the men in her life, “The Prince in Orange and the Prince in Blue / And the Prince whose rainment was of Lavender hue” (114). The Princess is in love with a minstrel, making the men in the song the same number as that in Liza’s life. More importantly, as was discussed earlier in this chapter, lavender has a long association with gay men.

“The Circus Dream” continues the associations of Russell with conventional signifiers of homosexuality, as he appears as the Ringmaster. A circus ringmaster is not part of the circus itself, but an outside narrator; one who introduces the action, but never takes part. Also, much as the early Jewish characters on the musical stage were metatheatrical directors, changing characters and the base situations (which allowed them survive), so too are these gay males. Lucy may keep a woman’s name, but is able to teach his female models how to walk correctly; so too is Russell a director of his own models, arranging people and objects to be most pleasing to the eye. As Ringmaster, he even sums up Liza’s situation with “What a show! What a situation! Can you conceive it? / If you saw it on the stage you wouldn’t believe it!” (137).

His final song, “Tschaikowsky,” stopped the show on opening night, pushing Danny Kaye into stardom. The lyric was in fact a poem written by Ira Gershwin and published in *Life* in 1924 as “The Music Hour.” The song consists entirely of the names

¹⁶¹ It has more to do, in actuality, with the fact that only after Victor Mature had been cast in the role did the collaborators discover he could not carry a tune (Block 149, Sanders 301).

of forty-nine Russian composers and was a chance for Kaye to show off his ability to deal in tongue-twisters; it has nothing at all to do with the scene, although Philip Furia believes it follows “dream logic” (168). The song stopped the show opening night, and the entire creative team was afraid it would ruin Lawrence’s star turn (and perhaps lose them her services), but she decided to better Kaye’s number. Her next song, “The Saga of Jenny,” had been performed straightforwardly during rehearsals. This time, Lawrence utilized bumps and grinds from burlesque traditions while she sang. This new performance style, and the sexual license Lawrence took, was more in keeping with not only the song itself (Jenny is a sexually promiscuous character), but with Liza’s problem, and the recklessness of a dream. It also places heterosexuality squarely at center, after the performance by a gay character of a song that simultaneously celebrates and parodies high culture. Of course, it would be expected that the gay character, as the “artistic” one, would know these composers; Russell/Ringmaster also stops the jury at one point to note the similarity of what they have been singing to Gilbert and Sullivan.

Each dream sequence has its own characteristic dance rhythm that recurs throughout. A fox trot covers “The Glamour Dream,” a bolero “The Wedding Dream,” and a waltz (and circus march) “The Circus Dream.” The first two were quite popular ballroom dances by the time of *Lady in the Dark*, but all three were recognizable to audiences in 1940. It is the waltz that is associated with Russell throughout this musical; of all the music in $\frac{3}{4}$, only one short phrase is not attached to him in some way. “The Glamour Dream has two waltz sections: the first is when Russell recognizes the line from a poem by Herrick and the second is when he brings the car to pick up Liza for an evening at the nightclub. It is in the third dream that he sings “The Best Years of His

Life,” a song actually marked in the score “Tempo di Valse” (114). It is difficult to tell exactly what is meant by this relationship between meter and character, but as the waltz has certain classical associations, it could simply be an extension of the approach that exhibits Russell as the “artistic” one of the group. The waltz was originally a dance that caused much sensation because the dancers had to hold each other so closely, but which had moved from a subversive, sexual dance to an acceptable one by 1940. This association would thereby make Russell somewhat asexual, but then why have the statement about his love life in the dialogue? The reasoning probably stems from both of these, but because the character is obviously meant to be portrayed as sympathetic, I believe that the waltz allows him a flirtation with hegemonic status, as well.

Moss Hart’s biographer, Steven Bach, says that Russell was “the only frankly gay character Moss ever wrote. Kaye made him so obvious that it was clear he was more interested in Randy Curtis than Liza was (224). It is difficult to understand this comment fully; it seems as if the stage directions and dialogue are as obvious as it was possible to be at the time, short of turning the piece into a melodramatic exploration of homosexuality and taking the story away from its protagonist. Kaier Curtin states that Russell was the first gay character to appear on the Broadway musical stage, which is obviously untrue, considering Madame Lucy’s debut in 1919. Curtin also believes that the character “differed little from countless other comic ‘faggot’ characters seen for more than half a century in burlesque and vaudeville skits in this country” (252). This is not quite true. For one thing, Russell appears in a substantially longer and more serious piece than those Curtin describes. For another, the serious characters in *Lady in the Dark* accept and apparently like Russell. He ends the play successful and happy (although he

is upset about some missing color photographic plates). Most importantly, the character is depicted as having a love life. At one point during the scene where he is photographing the models and the suit of armor, one of the women complains about the late hour. Russell responds, “Now, dear, *my* love life has been shot to hell, too” (126). There is no actual onstage depiction of this social life, but the character does have one, unlike Madame Lucy. At a time when suspected queer American persons were being hounded out of government and imprisoned, Russell represents a rather large stride forward.

“It’s Time to Open Up Your Closet:” Musical Gay Characters in the 1970s and Beyond

The Stonewall Riots, although by no means an isolated event, occurred in 1969, marking the beginning of the gay liberation movement. Gay characters had already been on the musical stage, more openly and overtly than in the two musicals examined above. *Cabaret* had set conversations going with the obviously bisexual Emcee (See Chapter 3) and 1968 gave the world *Your Own Thing*, a contemporary reworking of Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night*, which featured the Orsino character reading through encyclopedias about “latent homosexuality” in response to his attraction for “Charlie” (Viola’s assumed identity). The same year also featured *Hair*, wherein a male character sang “Sodomy” as one of the musical’s many hot buttons designed to upset the authorities.

After Stonewall, gay characters proliferated much more quickly. *Applause*, written by Charles Strouse, Betty Comden, and Adolph Green, opened less than a year later, in March of 1970. *Applause* contained the first openly gay character who identifies himself as such, rather than being presented semiotically. The musical is based on *All*

About Eve, the 1950 film starring Bette Davis. Duane, the gay character, has his share of stereotypical signifiers—he is a witty hairdresser—but among his first lines is his answer to being asked to escort two “lonely ladies out on the town.” He responds, “I’ve got a date,” and is told “Bring him along” (610). Duane is really no less a type than Lucy or Russell, but at least the “love that dare not speak its name” was in fact being named on the American musical stage. Duane is a step backwards in one important way, however: he does not sing. As has been discussed throughout this dissertation, song is the currency on the musical stage, and for Duane never to be given a solo is the equivalent to telling us he is not part of the community.

Camp became popular during the 1970s and camp musicals gained at least a toehold during that time. Camp has long been associated with gay males, mostly because of their presumed ability to read the simultaneity within the works. In fact, Richard Dyer has defined camp as that which “holds together qualities that are elsewhere felt as antithetical: theatricality and authenticity[,] . . . intensity and irony, a fierce assertion of extreme feeling with a deprecating sense of its absurdity” (154). The lives of gay men in America have often contained just these divergent concurrencies: the presumption within society is that everyone is heteronormative, yet these men are not. Even more importantly, there is an innate theatricality within the “passing” that this presumption allows/enforces.

Most of the specifically camp musicals did not do terribly well, but there was a certain aspect of camp to the craze for 1920s revivals (*Irene*; *No, No, Nanette*, *Good News*) and there were at least two full-scale original works that attempted an all-out camp approach. Tom Eyen’s *Rachael Lily Rosenbloom (And Don’t You Forget It!)* closed in

previews in 1973.¹⁶² Perhaps more interestingly, *The Rocky Horror Show* failed as well, but acquired a kind of afterlife, due primarily to the film's success as a cult item. *The Rocky Horror Show* is beautifully subversive; it has been described as the film containing *everyone* about whom your mother warned you. It succeeds by doing much the same type of thing that *The Producers* does, taking cliché and stereotype, emphasizing them, and going through them to the end. If Frank 'N' Furter were only interested in men, the show would undoubtedly be less popular, but the character is a sexual omnivore. Where the work succeeds very well is in the overt pairing of the monstrous and queer signifiers: every monster movie formula has been extended to connote the queering of the characters' sexuality. When Brad and Janet first enter the castle, she whispers "Let's get out of here! There's something . . . unhealthy . . . about this place!" The 1950s horror films the work parodies often use similar lines, but the threat in this case is to her narrow sexual outlook.

The 1980s saw works such as *La Cage Aux Folles* (1983) and *Starlight Express* (1987), where the sexism battles with homophobia and xenophobia.¹⁶³ The 1990s, however, has seen a large increase of gay male characters, many of whom move in the direction of post-gay (see below). Michael John LaChiusa's *Hello Again* (1994) interrupts the heteronormative flow of Schnitzler's *Reigen*; *Victor/Victoria* (1995) confuses the concepts with a heterosexual woman pretending to be a gay man pretending to be a woman, and recent works such as *Naked Boys Singing* (1999) and *Bed, Boys and Beyond* (2000) simply celebrate both the bodies and the sexuality of the characters/actors onstage. Transgender and fully queer characters got their due in the musical *Hedwig and*

¹⁶² The extra "a" in her first name is the one her idol, Barbra Streisand, dropped.

the Angry Inch, in which the title character is an East German immigrant living in a trailer park in America. She is also the recipient of a botched male-to-female gender reassignment surgery. Hedwig is perhaps the perfect postmodern person: neither male nor female, neither east nor west.¹⁶⁴

“Shut Up, You Big Dyke!:)” The (Nearly) Invisible Lesbian on the Musical Stage

Despite the proliferation of gay male characters, lesbian-identified characters in musical theatre are few and far between. They are even more rarely depicted positively than gay males. As far as I have been able to ascertain, unlike their gay male counterparts, no lesbian characters have ever been the lead roles in a major musical.

Chicago (Kander & Ebb, 1975; 1997) follows the murders and scandals of women who wish to be entertainers. The matron of the women’s prison, “Mama” Morton, is meant to reflect Sophie Tucker; the original concept for the musical was that each scene was performed in the style of various vaudeville entertainers. Her most significant song, “When You’re Good To Mama,” is stuffed with innuendo, Tucker-like:

If you want my gravy,
Pepper my ragout.
Spice it up for Mama.
She’ll get hot for you.

When they pass that basket
Folks contribute to,
You put in for Mama
She’ll put out for you.

¹⁶³ Females are not allowed to be engines in this musical based loosely on *The Little Engine that Could* (the concept never even occurs to anyone); the villain of the piece is a French “bisexual” engine named AC/DC.

¹⁶⁴ The song “The Origin of Love” actually takes as its foundation the discussion of the subject in Plato’s *Symposium*; Hedwig is constantly looking for her other half.

Given Mama's occupation, and working as she does exclusively with women, the lesbian subtext is really more of an "overttext, a text that was noticeably disregarded during the recent revival (thereby throwing Mama's lesbianism even more into the shade).

Grand Hotel (1989) has a difficult history. Based on the novel and play by Vicki Baum, the musical version by Robert Wright and George Forrest went on the road for tryouts in 1958 and closed there. It was reworked by Tommy Tune and the score was rearranged and edited by Maury Yeston, who added seven songs of his own. The 1989 version ran for 1,018 performances. The lesbian character was named Raffaella, a confidante and personal secretary to an aging ballerina, Elizaveta Grushinskaya. Raffaella is in love with her employer and spends so much of the musical mooning over Elizaveta that the *Forbidden Broadway* version of the musical summed her up with one outburst from the ballerina: "Shut up, you big dyke! I have tutus straighter than you!" The character has no sexuality at all in the novel, and is depicted as so nondescript that other people barely see her as a human being. The musical's Raffaella is rather colorless and does spend the entire musical yearning for the love of her employer but actually puts the woman she loves first, protecting her and caring about her.

Aspects of Love (1990) and *Nick and Nora* (1991) are perhaps the most tasteless purveyors of lesbian stereotypes around. The former, by Andrew Lloyd Webber, Don Black and Charles Hart, attempts to show the tribulations of a love within a small group; what occurred was a sexist soap opera. The *Forbidden Broadway* version begins with a new lyric to "Love—love changes everything" that now reads "I—I sleep with everyone," although this is only true within the heteroexual male Gaze of the authors. George's fiancée and mistress not only know of each other's existence, but become

friends and eventually lovers, as well. When Rose marries George, Giulietta kisses her passionately on the mouth as “best man,” while George looks on “approvingly,” applauds, and calls out “Bravo.” *Nick and Nora* (1991) lasted only nine performances, had much in it that was better than critics believed, and was just as offensive in its depiction of lesbians; the lesbian in this work “became one” after being raped by a man as a young woman.

Lesbian couples occur in only two musicals, Jonathan Larson’s *Rent* (1996) and *Falsettoland*, the last section of William Finn’s “Marvin musicals.” *Rent* is still playing as of this writing. Maureen, a performance artist, and Joanne, an attorney break up and reunite over the course of the evening. Larson was told repeatedly during workshops of the musical that the two characters were not realistically drawn (McDonnell & Sillberger 24) As it stands now, the lesbian couple suffers from the same stereotyping that infuses the entire work: success automatically equals selling out; gay male couples conform to heterosexist male/female roles; and lesbians practice “tough love,” with constant bickerings and plays for the upper hand. At one point, during a potentially tender moment, the two women reunite and kiss, only to draw blood while doing so. There is an odd inversion of Eve Sedgwick’s “homosocial triangulation,” wherein two men will interact with each other over the body of a woman both desire. *Rent* contains “heterosocial triangulation,” where Mark (Maureen’s ex-lover) and Joanne sing and dance their discussion of Maureen. They dance a tango, traditionally a dance of great passion; since they are dancing with each other, it’s difficult to avoid the idea that the passion might be for each other, particularly since Mark seems quite content to be

dancing with Joanne. Notably, there is no mention of any kind that Mark's relationship with Maureen ever contained any of the storms or aggression between the two women.

Since I have discussed *Falsettos* at length in Chapter Five, I will simply reiterate that the "lesbians from next door" are in a stable relationship, part of the larger family (as is the female couple in *Rent*), and are presented as loving, positive, and just as neurotic as the other characters. So far, this is the best lesbian relationship depicted on the musical stage. It's a terrible batting average.

It also indicates something that is implied within the history of queer characters onstage: presence does not necessarily equal subversion, nor does any representation at all stand as positive. While the 1960s and 1970s would continue to portray gay males, at least, in a more and more positive light, little of substance changed until 1998's *A New Brain*. Before that, musicals either showed gay men as supporting characters (often with little to contribute *or* sing) or the object of the musical was to depict the character's coming to terms with his sexuality (even Finn's "Marvin" musicals do this, but he would move on to something different by the late 1990s).

Post-gay

Paul Burston coined the term "post-gay" in 1994. It originally meant the ability for gay and lesbian people to critique gay politics or gay culture. James Collard has used it to suggest that gay persons no longer define themselves "solely in terms of our sexuality—even if our opponents do" (Collard 53). Since its invention, the meaning of the term has slipped and altered even further, moving toward a rejection of terms of sexuality altogether. In this world, post-gay equals not straight, but not gay; there is an

equilibrium where sexuality is disconnected from gender, and life exists outside categories. Frank Browning has interviewed large crowds of gay men (particularly young ones) that are abandoning sexual identities; they do not consider themselves “gay,” but neither do they like “straight” (Browning). Donald Morton believes that queer theory understands that the gay and lesbian rights movement failed (370). If that is true, and the gay movement has been replaced by queer theory, then gay is indeed “post,” and queer perhaps takes in post-gay, as well as other styles of thought. So what, other than posthumanist cyberspace, would take in post-gay as a foundation? Perhaps the idea that labels are simply past their usefulness.

The Post-gay World of *A New Brain*

Everybody knows by now that Bill Finn was diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumor, almost died, and then didn't. *A New Brain* is his response: not to the threat of death but to the joy of living. There is no anger to be found, no bitterness (although there are a few affectionately satiric jabs at some crazy hospital shenanigans), but the general tone is one of gratitude, forgiveness, and elation. There is no way this most generous of songwriters could have written any other kind of show. (Bishop *Brain* 8)

The story of *A New Brain* (1998) is not told in a linear fashion: flashbacks, fantasies, inner monologues, and hallucinations are woven into the show's narrative framework. Death hovers over the entire piece, but a great deal of the material is comic. Though this sounds confusing, Finn handles it all deftly, and there are definite similarities to Finn's own life. Gordon Schwinn¹⁶⁵ is attempting to write a song about frogs with no success when he realizes he is late for a lunch appointment. It is at lunch (with his agent and friend Rhoda) that the audience learns Gordon writes the music for a children's television show starring Mr. Bungee, a talking frog. Gordon is having difficulty writing

for the show because he believes it is taking away from his talent. As the two continue to talk, he hallucinates that Mr. Bungee is there, eventually falling face first into his food. At the hospital, his Mother and his life-partner, Roger, learn that he has a brain tumor. Mother insists (a bit frantically) things will be fine and Roger wishes it was just another day and he was sailing.

During the first portion of his stay in the hospital, Gordon tells the story of how his father lost the family money betting on horse races. As time passes, he loses heart and asks Roger to simply leave rather than watching him deteriorate; his partner stays. He meets Richard, the “nice nurse,” a gay African-American male, who sings of being “Poor, Unsuccessful and Fat.” During the MRI procedure, Roger suggests Gordon think of sailing and the machine becomes a makeshift boat.

The night before Gordon’s surgery, Roger insists on staying with him; when Rhoda tells him that Mr. Bungee has insisted on a song by the next day, Gordon sends his lover home, telling him that this might be his last chance for some kind of immortality. Mother goes to the men’s home to clean for them, and in doing so, loses control and throws out all Gordon’s books, insisting that “they have made his brain explode.”

After the surgery, Gordon slips into a coma. Roger talks with Lisa, a street woman he met earlier; she commiserates with him. Mother begins to grieve her son’s impending death while Richard sings of food, but also keeps encouraging his patient to wake up. Meanwhile, the audience is taken on a journey inside Gordon’s hallucinatory dreams while Mr. Bungee angrily denounces him as a quitter; Gordon ends the dream by waking up.

¹⁶⁵ Note the exceptional similarity between the names of character and composer.

The final scenes are much later, as Gordon is about to be released from the hospital. Richard has come in to give him one last sponge bath and finds Roger lying in the bed next to his lover; the two mischievously hide under the covers. On the walk home, the two men find Lisa, who does not seem to remember Roger, selling Gordon's books for two dollars apiece. As Gordon becomes angry, Roger reminds him that they are not important, because Gordon has received the gift of time. The musical ends with Gordon at the piano, surrounded by his family, singing a full-scale version of the song he was working on at the play's beginning, "I Feel So Much Spring."

For audience members who do not know the story ahead of time, there is a certain sense of being plunged into the work *in media res*, with questions and situations handled by the cast with minimum explanation; only gradually does Finn take care of the exposition.¹⁶⁶ It is only with the second scene that the audience realizes that Gordon's first attempts at "The Spring Song" are for a children's show. After he collapses, Rhoda sings to herself that she "should try to locate Roger," but it is only a few scenes later that Roger's identity as Gordon's partner is revealed.

It is this type of structure that allows *A New Brain* to be called post-gay. Unlike the majority of the musicals mentioned above, the relationship between Roger and Gordon is essentially taken for granted. There is no explanation for an audience that might not understand, and Roger and Gordon themselves take their marriage for granted. In presenting the couple in this manner, they are made (homo)normative. Unlike Marvin in Finn's earlier works, these characters are gay, have accepted that they are gay, and do not worry about the question. Nor do any of the other characters. Gordon's Mother, Rhoda, and Richard all take the relationship in stride, never missing a beat. The

relationships are not labeled, but simply shown (with the exception that Gordon's mother is always called "Mother" in the libretto).

The reviews were not always enthusiastic for the new Finn. Vincent Canby called it "weak" and "banal" in places. Nelson Pressley in *The Washington Post* called many of the numbers "mushy." In both cases, the reviewers misinterpret crucial ideas: Canby yearns for a return to the earlier days of Finn's work, bemoaning the placement of "Heart and Music," and stating that it occurs too early in the musical for the audience to understand its full meaning. He obviously has forgotten "Four Jews in a Room Bitching," which makes no sense to an audience unfamiliar with the show before they enter the auditorium, but which starts the musical so well no one cares.

More importantly, however, Canby's *Times* review evinces a subtle but unmistakable homophobia. He calls "Sailing" "banal," mentioning particularly that it is sung by Roger's lover. "One of the show's better songs is sung by a robustly gay male nurse, who rues his fate in "Poor, Unsuccessful and Fat." Canby sounds much like the media critics (and audiences) who bemoan the lack of good, old-fashioned values, when you could tell the queens from the straights, and they evinced the wonderfully old-fashioned bitchy qualities. Vito Russo describes several of these examples in *The Celluloid Closet* (Russo, Chapter 4). Nelson Pressley sounds a similar note when he discusses the number of stereotypes he finds in the musical, such as the fact that "hosts of children's TV programs are nice only on camera; off camera they are devils" (C1). These critics are not only missing the point, they are resisting the subversive message. There was no carping about stereotypes when the pieces of *Falsettoland* made their debut, but that was because Marvin was still working through his sexuality as a problem.

¹⁶⁶ This is part of Finn's writing style.

Once the sexuality has been accepted and is not a part of the story per se, the responses are negative, just as they originally were when gay males were first depicted onstage. There is a notable exception to this carping: Polly Warfield describes the musical as depicting “a pleasant situation in which everyone without so much as a raised eyebrow accepts the union of Gordon and Peter for what it is, a loving and supportive relationship” (13).

Pressley continues by saying that “Roger is introduced in ‘I’d Rather Be Sailing,’ and the warm breeze of a melody is ironic counterpoint for the initially barbed portrait of the character as an absent, simpleminded playboy” (C1). This literally makes no sense. It is true that it may take a moment for audiences to orient themselves to what Roger is doing, but it does not seem to me to be that difficult a task.

I’d rather be sailing,
Yes I would,
On an open sea. . . .
The sun is on my neck,
The wind is in my face,
The water’s incredibly blue. (Finn *Brain* 16-17).

Pressley does get his impression of the melody correct; it is expansive and beautiful. But what he neglects to notice is that Roger takes his partner with him on this imaginary journey, eventually pulling Gordon along vocally, first with echoes, and eventually joining him in gorgeous harmony. This is not the song of a man who is presented as self-absorbed or a “playboy,” but one who uses his knowledge of his lover and himself to calm Gordon down upon his admission to the hospital. The fact that Roger enters and essentially begins singing the song with little preparation is indicative of the post-gay status of this created world. It is assumed that the audience can figure out the relationship between the two men; no explanation is provided. The music provides

assistance with this subversion, as well. Beautiful harmony is usually reserved for heterosexual couples onstage.

The song also establishes Roger's love of sailing, a subject the musical will return to later. During Gordon's MRI scan, Roger suggests that he "think sailing" to combat his claustrophobia; they relive a sailing vacation when they were "Sitting Becalmed in the Lee of Cuttyhunk," with the MRI machine transforming into a sailboat and as it all ends, the cast sings "I think we're moving." Gordon asks "Could that be a metaphor?" and adds, "Getting somewhere at last / Is a sign of things improving" (21). The song continues the post-gay idea; Gordon obviously does not like sailing very much, while it is Roger's "favorite thing in the world." As Gordon continues to complain, his partner asks him "Would it kill you to try / To enjoy this a little bit? . . . / Why are you such an ass?" (21). In a great many post-Stonewall musical works, it has usually seemed important to the creators to generate a completely positive image of their gay characters. While Roger and Gordon are positively portrayed, they are reminiscent of the characters in Finn's other works in being neurotic, flawed, and human as well.

Gordon's mother is supportive of her son's relationship with Roger and questions it no more than any other character. The night before the surgery, Roger provides "An Invitation to Sleep In My Arms" by climbing into bed next to Gordon, who assumes it is about sex and refuses him. Roger tells him that it is just about the two of them being together. As Gordon agrees, he discovers that Mr. Bungee is giving him an ultimatum: either supply a song by the next day or Mr. Bungee's son will do so. As Gordon considers the idea, his Mother tells him he is being silly: "Lie with the man! / Whaddaya,

stupid?” (22). Gordon does eventually send his lover away because it might be his last chance to write something for which he will be remembered.

After the surgery, Gordon does not wake up. As Roger dejectedly trudges home, he runs into Lisa, a homeless woman. When she asks him why he is so upset, he tells her what has happened, but haphazardly enough that he never actually gives her enough information to ascertain the men’s relationship. Yet she figures it out easily, saying only “You love him. / Too bad. / What are you looking surprised for? / . . . / Life is a rotten occasion.” She hugs him and listens to his repeated “It was a really lousy day in the universe.” Although there are implications that Lisa has somewhat more than ordinary acumen, the men’s relationship is taken for granted in the world of the musical, and therefore by the audience. These two men are part of the community, part of society, and there is no reason by this point to call attention to their relationship, any more than it would be necessary to explain a heterosexual couple in similar circumstances.

While the relationship between Gordon and Roger is presented as post-gay, Richard the nurse is less easily categorized as such, although neither he nor those around him feel the need to label his orientation, either. His actions, however, are somewhat more stereotypical. For example, when he first enters to give Gordon a sponge bath, the composer objects. Richard’s first comment is a wry “Honey, I don’t want to be here, either,” and begins to sing “Poor, Unsuccessful and Fat,” a sardonic commentary on his life as a nurse, and the prognosis of a full recovery for Gordon; the song mirrors Gordon’s antipathy for his own job writing for Mr. Bungee. However, Richard is extremely supportive of Gordon’s recovery. During the composer’s comatose

hallucinations, Richard sings of “Eating Myself Up Alive,” and through the course of the song begins roaring the word “alive,” directing it toward the still-unconscious Gordon.

After Gordon’s recovery, Richard enters to give him his last sponge bath. When he finds Roger and Gordon in bed, he tells them “You boys / Are gonna / Get me / In such trouble. / . . . / But I don’t care. / A nurse / Should help a patient get better. / Not always according to the letter. / That’s why you boys are getting / Wetter and wetter” (30). In other words, while the two being in bed together might be against hospital rules, Richard is fully aware of their need to be together.

The musical ends with Roger giving Gordon the gift of time. “Time to screw around. . . . Time to kiss the ground. . . . Time to value what you’ve found” (32). The final song is Gordon’s finished “Spring Song,” sung with his family, friends, and those who have been around him during the course of the evening.

The score for *A New Brain* is much like that of Finn’s earlier Marvin musicals, but it is softer and less sardonic than *Falsettos*. Finn has said that after his experience, he is no longer the same man who wrote *Falsettos* (Pall 41). There is more group singing than in the *Falsetto* works, which essentially supports the post-gay idea in itself: as was discussed in Chapter 4, non-traditional families sing together very little. For a post-gay household, the “family” component of their relationship is a given, and therefore, this group can sing together en masse more often. During the opening number, “Heart and Music” (one of Finn’s opening songs that give a great deal of information that makes little to no sense until the musical is over, but which sets the tone well), Roger is given an entire verse, which he sings alone and with Gordon. When the number moves to the

larger group and harmony, Roger, Gordon, and his Mother are always kept together on one vocal line, emphasizing their familial relationship musically.

Generally speaking, this score is precisely as quirky and energetic as Finn's other works. It is certainly more overtly emotional, but that emotion fits its plot.

'I don't think 'A New Brain' is without spikiness,' he [Finn] says. 'But it's tempered. The lyrics—I was no longer afraid to say simple things simply. You can be rueful and dark and ironic and say these simple things cleverly,' he adds. But to let a song flow directly from the heart is harder. 'I don't know that I could have achieved this in earlier days.' (Pall 41)

It was also not possible in earlier days to achieve the serene acceptance of queer sexuality as part of the society in which it belongs, writing a reality of homonormativity.

In an odd way, this stance comes full circle. It does have a different emphasis, however. For a long time, there was no onstage mention homosexuality because it was thereby devalued and made invisible. During the early twentieth century, the "love that dare not speak its name" made furtive appearances, usually negatively encoded, with the musical stage at the forefront regarding positive depictions. As time passed, the depictions became more frequent and more positive, but works with gay or lesbian characters tended to be *about* homosexuality. During the 1990s, and with such works as *A New Brain*, there is again no mention made of homosexuality per se, with the major difference that it is both visible and positive.

“There’s no love song finer,
But how strange the change
From major to minor
Every time we say goodbye.”
Cole Porter, “Every Time We Say Goodbye,” *Seven Lively Arts*

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

Subversion can be a narrative moment, or a performance, stance or reception which negates the oppressive binaries of the dominant hegemony (“normality”). It disrupts narrative equilibrium and sets in motion some form of questioning. By this definition, musicals have *always been* subversive, whatever their subject. Nothing disrupts narrative equilibrium quite so much as the songs from the earlier musicals, which contribute little (or nothing) to the storyline; this is certainly something Brecht borrowed for his *verfremdungseffekt*. But musicals also reverse binaries constantly: between community and Otherness, between music and speech, and between realistic modes of drama and song and dance.

It is precisely their popularity that allows them to subvert so many prevailing hegemonies. Harry M. Benshoff wrote, in *Monsters in the Closet*, his 1997 exploration of the queer side of horror film, that “what these denigrated artifacts might have to say about the culture they encode and provoke is frequently ignored and/or discounted. . . . I will be insisting that there is much to learn from looking at such texts” (3-4). There are in fact marked similarities between musical theatre and horror film: both are “denigrated artifacts” for most academics; both have been very popular genres; and both have

appropriated and given rise to performance conventions that have remained important elsewhere.

Musicals have often centered the Other, illustrating that what is “normal” is, in fact, the Other him/herself. Examples of this run through those works examined in this dissertation and although characters such as Madame Lucy or Bloody Mary may not be centered as completely as Gordon Schwinn or Fosca, they remain secondary leads of their musicals, and catalysts for the normative characters to acknowledge (or embrace, at some points) Otherness. The list of central Others is long, and would include Tony and Maria in *West Side Story* (1957), Frank ‘N’ Furter in *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1973), and the conjoined twins Daisy and Violet Hilton in *Side Show* (1997). Even the recently closed *Cats* (1981) represented a broken-down old female cat who did/could not dance (the currency of that particular musical) as the one worthy of traveling to the Heavyside Layer (a/k/a Cat Heaven).

Historically, academics seem to have denied this idea and relegated the genre of musicals to popular culture, tolerated because their presentation brings money into performance and theatre departments, but certainly not worthy of serious study. This is changing, but as long ago as 1971, Tom Eyen, himself then an experimental playwright, stated that he believed that it was a loss so few experimental artists were interested in the field. He said he learned less from Grotowski than from the American musical.

There’s nothing we haven’t seen before but combinations can be new, and I guess the greatest combination America has given us is the musical comedy. They dance, they sing. The technique is incredible, the discipline is phenomenal, the style is sometimes overwhelming, the changes . . . it’s experimental theatre. (Qtd in Hayman)

At some point, the genre seems to have cultivated an essential aspect of the human psyche: as much as humans wish to feel in control and dominant, more often they feel powerless and displaced. The works mentioned above tell the subalterns—sexual, ethnic, and/or lower class—that they are not alone. This is being made more and more overt; witness the following lyric from *Side Show*, in which the twins discuss their Otherness:

Like a fish plucked from the ocean
Tossed into a foreign stream,
Always knew that I was different
Often fled onto a dream.
I ignored the raging currents,
Right against the tide I swam.
But I floated with the question
Who will love me as I am? (18).

Objectively, many of these musicals may seem to reinforce community (*Oklahoma!*, *The Music Man*, *Brigadoon*), but the force of the stories and the underlying music undermines a closed concept of community. In the three musicals mentioned, each “closed” group opens itself to outsiders: a peddler, a con man, and a lonely wanderer. They are each obviously expected to change their manner of life, but they are also accepted and loved for who they are. Simultaneously, the musical theatre celebrates the outsider who draws others to him/her: Mame Dennis (*Mame*), Seymour Krelborne (*Little Shop of Horrors*), Jack Skellington (the film *The Nightmare Before Christmas*), and the majority of the cast of *Rent*. In each of these musicals, people are drawn together to create a new community, one which celebrates some type of difference. The last attempts to not only normalize queer (gay and lesbian) characters, but also persons with AIDS.

The queer side(s) of musical theatre are, in fact, what have been examined throughout this dissertation; the last chapter was something of a natural outgrowth,

dealing as it does directly with queer male characters. The subjects within these pages have much in common. To begin with, they are each rather similar to Justice Potter Stewart's famous description of pornography in 1964: "I shall not today attempt further to define the kinds of material I understand to be embraced within that shorthand description; and perhaps I could never succeed in intelligibly doing so. But I know it when I see it" (qtd in Rudin n.p.). This inability to pin down a definition holds true for each of the areas under discussion here: class, family, and sexual behavior vary widely, and attempting to define them only serves to extend the problem. The terms "gay and lesbian" have been joined over the years by "bisexual," "transgender," and "queer," to name just a few. Even something seemingly as concrete as whether a person is Jewish or not becomes problematic when approached from various directions: does the nomenclature refer to ethnicity, religion, or some combination of the two?

If nothing else, these questions should serve to highlight the fact that perhaps the hegemony is so easily undermined because it is not nearly as concrete as we might like to believe. To extrapolate from Eric Rauchway's ideas on the unclear definition(s) of family, the topics herein "occupy an indefinite and messy middle ground between our private affairs and our public business, and anything crossing from one of those categories to the other must cover some unsteady footing" (1-2).

In January of 1998, a new musical opened as the inaugural event at New York's Ford Center for the Performing Arts. Based on a 1975 novel by E. L. Doctorow, *Ragtime* concerned itself with every theme in this dissertation, particularly the many Others at the turn of the nineteenth century. Class structure is dealt with through several avenues, particularly in the use of actual historical figures such as Emma Goldman and Henry

Ford. Goldman spends a great deal of her stage time pointing out that capitalism is inequitable and unfair to the poorest people within the system; Ford arrives onstage by means of a descending bridge which literally almost crushes his workers. Ethnic and racial themes suffuse the work: Act One ends with the murder of a young African-American woman and the choral response contains the line “What is wrong with this country?” The work ends with a newly politicized woman (known throughout as Mother, her name in the novel) revealing her knowledge that she has to take some control of her own life; one manner in which she does so is by remarrying after her husband’s death. The man she remarries is a Jewish immigrant and they adopt the young son of the murdered African-American woman, thus creating a truly extended/blended family. While there are no openly gay or lesbian characters, the historical Goldman has been reclaimed as lesbian. There are also several other instances of non-heteronormative sexualities, including discussions of masturbation and the depiction of Evelyn Nesbit’s appearance in court at the trial of her husband, who shot her lover.

As must be evident from the musicals examined in this book, musical theatre has shaped and been shaped by the prevailing cultural conflicts that have wrought America itself. And the field’s popularity with the public allows for a presentation of the tension(s) innate within the various authority/subaltern binaries inherent in America today. Ironically, it is the very popularity of the genre that has allowed it to present challenges to hegemonic practices; otherwise, it would often simply be a case of “preaching to the converted.”

The emotional life of characters on the musical stage is in the music they sing. It is, in fact, because these characters sing that they are allowed a depth that seems lacking

when the libretto alone is studied. Nicholas Hytner, in discussing his current project, says of *Carousel* that “it is through music that *Carousel* discovers who its protagonists are. It is Rogers and Hammerstein’s intuition that through musical comedy, people who can’t speak about their feelings can sing them. They found music in the gaps between the lines” (Hytner).

In harnessing cultural imperatives to its artistic sensibilities, musical theatre has changed the concept of Otherness forever. Life, according to many of these works, is a perpetual zigzag between community and self, between feeling Other and part of something greater. Perhaps one of the problems for the academy regarding musical theatre is that so many things happen at one time—singing, dancing, dialogue, underscoring—that the form can mask the subversive Other with what often seems like hegemonic structures. But the American musical theatre gives voice—in more ways than one—to the Other; no wonder it is such a popular style of theatre. The genre has become a national touchstone, with hit television shows such as *Buffy*, *The Vampire Slayer*, *The Simpsons*, *The Drew Carey Show*, and *South Park* all utilizing aspects of musicals, or simply adopting the musical format for entire episodes. Just as America continues to reinvent itself, so too does the American musical, developing a powerful record of the nation’s past while continuing a lasting vitality and relevance to today, and to the future.

WORKS CITED

- Adam, Barry D. *The Rise of a Gay and Lesbian Movement*. Rev. ed. New York: Twayne Press, 1995.
- Adams, Michael C.C. *The Best War Ever: America and World War II*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994.
- Anaheim, Ellwood. "Madame Lucy and the Changing Tide of Broadway: Opening Remarks by Ellwood Anaheim at the 2001 Musical Theatre Research Project Performance." <www.geocities.com/musictheater/irene/irene.html>.
- Arad, Gulie Ne'eman. *America, Its Jews, and the Rise of Nazism*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000.
- Arnove, Anthony. "Farewell to the Working Class?" *Bad Subjects: Political Education for Everyday Life*. October 1995. <eserver.org/bs/22/arnove.html>.
- Atkinson, Brooks. *Broadway Scrapbook*. New York: Theatre Arts, 1947.
- Banfield, Stephen. *Sondheim's Broadway Musicals*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993.
- Barr, Richard L. *Rooms With a View: The Stages of Community in the Modern Theatre*. Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1998.
- Beidler, Philip. "South Pacific and American Remembering; or, 'Josh, We're Going to Buy This Son of a Bitch!'" *Journal of American Studies* 27 (1993): 207-222.
- Benshoff, Harry M. *Monsters in the Closet: Homosexuality and the Horror Film*. Manchester, England: Manchester University Press, 1997.
- Bentley, Eric. *From the American Drama*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1956.
- Bergson, Henri. *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*. Trans. Cloudesley Brereton and Fred Rothwell. New York: MacMillan, 1911.
- Biale, David. "The Melting Pot and Beyond: Jews and the Politics of American Identity." *Insider/Outsider: American Jews and Multiculturalism*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998. 17-33.
- Bishop, Andre. "Introduction." *The Marvin Songs: Three One-Act Musicals*. Garden City (NY): Fireside Theatre, 1991. v-viii.
- . "I Don't Care What Anyone Says; This is a Love Letter to William Finn." Liner notes. *A New Brain*. RCA Victor, 1998.

- “Bi Italy.” *Bisexual World*. <www.bisexualworld.it/English/biitaly.htm>.
- Block, Geoffrey. “The Broadway Canon From *Show Boat* to *West Side Story* and the European Operatic Ideal.” *Journal of Musicology* 11 (Fall 1993): 525-44.
- . *Enchanted Evenings: The Broadway Musical from Show Boat to Sondheim*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Bloom, Allen. *The Closing of the American Mind*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Trans. Richard Nice. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984.
- Brady, Marilyn Dell. “The New Model Middle-Class Family (1815-1930).” *American Families: A Research Guide and Historical Handbook*. Joseph M. Hawes and Elizabeth I. Nybakken, eds. New York: Greenwood Press, 1991: 83-124.
- Brantley, Ben. “Carnival Above Ground, Tragedy Below.” Rev. of *Floyd Collins*. *New York Times*. 4 March 1996: C14.
- Brett, Philip. “Musicality, Essentialism, and the Closet.” *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology*. Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood, and Gary C. Thomas, eds. New York: Routledge, 1994: 9-26.
- Brodin, Karen. *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says About Race in America*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1998.
- Brown, Jason Robert and Alfred Urhy. *Parade*. Cast recording. RCA Victor, 1999.
- Brown, Jason Robert. *Parade*. Piano-vocal score. Ed. Jason Robert Brown, ed. Milwaukee, Hal Leonard Music, 1999.
- Browning, Frank. *A Queer Geography: Journeys Toward a Sexual Self*. New York: Crown, 1996.
- Bruce, Robert V. *1877: Year of Violence*. Chicago: Elephant Paperbacks, 1989.
- Brustein, Robert. “The Jew Who Buried Hitler.” *The New Republic*. <www.thenewrepublic.com/052801/brustein052801-print.html>.
- Bullough, Vern and Bonnie Bullough. *Sexual Attitudes: Myths and Realities*. Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 1995.
- Burke, Martin J. *The Conundrum of Class: Public Discourse on the Social Order in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.

- Carrigan, Thomas Charles. "The Law and the American Child." Rpt. in *The Legal Rights of Children*, Sanford N. Katz, ed. New York: Arno Press, 1974: 99-183.
- Casdorff, Paul. D. *Let the Good Times Roll: Life At Home in America During World War II*. New York: Paragon House, 1989.
- Citron, Stephen. *Noel and Cole: The Sophisticates*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- . *The Wordsmiths: Oscar Hammerstein 2nd and Alan Jay Lerner*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Cockrell, Dale. "Jim Crow, Demon of Disorder." *American Music*. 14.2 (1996): 161-184.
- Collard, James. "Leaving the Gay Ghetto." *Newsweek*. 17 August 1998: 53.
- Coontz, Stephanie. *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap*. New York: Basic Books-HarperCollins, 1992.
- . *The Way We Really Are: Coming to Terms with America's Changing Families*. New York: Basic Books, 1997.
- Copeland, Roger. "Cabaret at the End of the World." *American Theatre*. January 1999: 24-28, 88-90.
- Crompton, Louis. *Shaw the Dramatist*. Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1969.
- Curtin, Kaier. *We Can Always Call Them Bulgarians: The Emergence of Lesbians and Gay Men on the American Stage*. Boston: Alyson Press, 1987.
- Cusick, Suzanne. "On a Lesbian Relationship With Music: A Serious Effort Not to Think Straight." *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology*. Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood, and Gary C. Thomas, eds. New York: Routledge, 1994: 167-184.
- Davidoff, Leonore, Megan Doolittle, Janet Fink, and Katherine Holden. *The Family Story: Blood, Contract and Intimacy, 1830-1960*. London: Longman, 1999.
- Dawidowicz, Lucy S. "Intergroup Relations and Tensions in The United States." *American Jewish Year Book 1967*. Volume 68. Morris Fine and Milton Himmelfarb, eds. New York: The American Jewish Committee, 1967.

- DeFoe, Ryan. "An Interview With Adam Guettel." "Talkin' Broadway: Boston."
<www.talkinbroadway.com/regional/boston/boston5.html>
- Denning, Michael. *Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century*. London: Verso, 1996.
- Dickinson, Robert Latu, and Lura Beam. *A Thousand Marriages: A Medical Study of Sex Adjustment*. Rpt. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1970.
- Diner, Hasia R. *A Time for Gathering: The Second Migration 1820-1880. The Jewish People in America*, Henry L. Feingold, ed. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992.
- Dobkowski, Michael N. *The Tarnished Dream: The Basis of American Anti-Semitism*. Westport, CT: Greenwood P, 1979.
- Dolan, Jill. "In Defense of the Discourse." *The Drama Review*. 33 (1989): 58-79.
- Dolgin, Janet L. *Defining the Family: Law, Technology, and Reproduction in an Uneasy Age*. New York: New York University Press, 1997.
- Doty, Alexander. *Making Things Perfectly Queer: Interpreting Mass Culture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993.
- Dukore, Barnard F. "The Middleaged Bully and the Girl of Eighteen: The Ending They Didn't Film." *The Shaw Review*. 14.3 (1971): 102-106.
- Eells, George. *The Life That Late He Led*. New York: GP Putnam's Sons, 1967.
- Engels, Friederich. *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*. New York: International Publishers, 1942.
- Engle, Gary D. *This Grotesque Essence: Plays From the American Minstrel Stage*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978.
- Erdman, Harley. *Staging the Jew: The Performance of an Ethnicity, 1860-1920*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997.
- Ericksen, Julia A., and Sally A. Steffen. *Kiss and Tell: Surveying Sex in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999.
- Feingold, Michael. "Little Letdowns." Rev. of *Floyd Collins. The Village Voice*. 12 March 1996: 71.
- Felsenstein, Frank. *Anti-Semitic Stereotypes: A Paradigm of Otherness in English Popular Culture, 1660-1830*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995.

Finn, William and James Lapine. *The Marvin Songs: Three One-Act Musicals*. Garden City, NY: Fireside Theatre, 1991.

---. *A New Brain*. Libretto. Liner notes. Cast recording. RCA Victor, 1998.

---. *A New Brain*. Vocal selections. Miami: Warner Brothers Publications, 1999.

---. *In Trousers*. Cast recording. Original Cast Recordings OC 9214.

---. *The March of the Fasettos and Falsettoland*. Cast recordings. DRG 22600.

---. *Falsettoland*. Vocal selections. Miami: Warner Brothers Publications, 1990.

Finson, Jon W. "Realism in Late Nineteenth-Century American Musical Theater: The Songs of Edward Harrigan and David Braham." *Edward Harrigan and David Braham: Collected Songs*, Volume 1. *Recent Researches in American Music*, Volume 27. Richard Crawford, ed. Madison, WI: A-R Editions, 1997: xv-xxxvii.

Fischer-Lichte Erika. *The Show and the Gaze of Theatre: A European Perspective*. Jo Riley, translator and editor. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1997.

Fletcher, Ronald. "Mating, the Family, and Marriage: A Sociological View." *Mating and Marriage*. Vernon Reynolds and John Kellett, eds. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991: 111-162.

Ford, Michael Thomas. *Alec Baldwin Doesn't Love Me and Other Trials of My Queer Life*. Los Angeles: Alyson Press, 1998.

Fordin, Hugh. *Getting To Know Him: A Biography of Oscar Hammerstein II*. New York: Random House, 1977.

Fraser, Steve. "The Gilded Age Unravels. *Sunday Book Review*. *The Los Angeles Times*. 1 April 2001. *The LA Times.com*. <www.calendarlive.com/top/1,1319,L-LATimes-Books-X!ArticleDetail-27571,00.html>.

Freedland, Michael. *Sophie: The Sophie Tucker Story*. London: The Woburn Press, 1978.

Friedman, Lester D. *Hollywood's Image of the Jew*. New York: Ungar, 1982.

Furia, Philip. *Ira Gershwin: The Art of the Lyricist*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.

- "Getting Their Dues: Trade Unions in America." *The Economist*. 25 March 1995.
<web4.infotrac.galegroup.com/itw/infomark/626/433/17470059w4/pur=rc1_ITOF_0_A16718114&dyn=9!xrn_1_0_A16718114?sw_aep=lln_alu>.
- Gibson-Graham, J.K., Stephen A. Resnick, and Richard D. Wolff. "Class in a Poststructuralist Frame." *Class and its Others*. J.K. Gibson-Graham, Stephen A. Resnick, and Richard D. Wolff, eds. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2000: 1-22.
- Gilje, Paul A. *Rioting in America*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1996.
- Gill, John. *Queer Noises: Male and Female Homosexuality in Twentieth Century Music*. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1995.
- Goodhart, Sandor. "'The Mother's Part': Love, Letters, and Reading in Sondheim's *Passion*." *Reading Stephen Sondheim: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Sandor Goodhart, ed. New York: Garland-Taylor & Francis, 2000: 221-258.
- Green, Stanley. *The World of Musical Comedy*, 4th ed. San Diego: A.S. Barnes & Company, 1980.
- Grode, Eric. "Parade Marches On." *ShowMusic*. East Haddam (CT): Goodspeed Opera House. Summer (2000): 37-39.
- Guare, John. Liner notes. *Floyd Collins*. Cast recording. Elektra/Asylum, 1996.
- Guettel, Adam, and Tina Landau. *Floyd Collins*. Libretto and Vocal Book. New York: Rodgers and Hammerstein Theatre Library, 1997.
- . *Floyd Collins*. Score. New York: Williamson Music, 2001.
- Györgyey, Clara. *Ferenc Molnar*. Boston: G.K. Hall & Co.-Twayne Publishers, 1980.
- Hamilton, Neil A., Jon Keith Brunelle, Beth Scully, and Rebecca Sherman. *Atlas of the Baby Boom Generation*. Detroit: Macmillan-Gale, 2000.
- Hamessley, Lydia. "Henry Lawe's Setting of Katherine Philip's Friendship Poetry in his Second Book of Ayres and Dialogues, 1655: A Musical Misreading?" *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology*. Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood, and Gary C. Thomas, eds. New York: Routledge, 1994: 115-138.
- Hammerstein, Oscar II. *Carousel*. Libretto. *Six Plays by Rodgers and Hammerstein*. New York: The Modern Library, 1959: 91-86.
- . *Oklahoma!* Libretto. New York: Williamson Music, 1954.

- . *Oklahoma!* Libretto. *Six Plays by Rodgers and Hammerstein*, by Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein. New York: Random House, 1955: 7-90.
- Hammerstein, Oscar II and Joshua Logan. *South Pacific*. Libretto. New York: Random House, 1949.
- Hapke, Laura. *Labor's Text: The Worker in American Fiction*. New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 2001.
- Hareven, Tamara K. *Families, History, and Social Change*. Boulder (CO): Perseus-Westview, 2000.
- Harold, Rena D., and Patricia Stow Boles. "Telling the Family Story: The Backdrop." *Becoming a Family: Parents' Stories and their Implications for Practice, Policy, and Research*. Rena D. Harold., ed. Mahway, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2000.
- Harrigan, Edward and David Braham. "Baxter Avenue." Song from *The Leather Patch*. *Edward Harrigan and David Braham: Collected Songs*, Volume 2. *Recent Researches in American Music*, Volume 28. Richard Crawford, Editor-in-Chief. Mark Clague, Executive Editor. Madison (WI): A-R Editions, 1997: 151-162.
- . *Mordecai Lyons*. Score. *Edward Harrigan and David Braham: Collected Songs*, Volume 1. *Recent Researches in American Music*, Volume 27. Richard Crawford, Editor-in-Chief. Mark Clague, Executive Editor. Madison (WI): A-R Editions, 1997: 285-298.
- Harrigan, Edward. *Reilly and the 400*. *Irish American Theatre*. Katherine K. Preston, ed. New York: Garland, 1994.
- Hart, Dorothy. *Thou Swell, Thou Witty: The Life and Lyrics of Lorenz Hart*. New York: Harper and Row, 1976.
- Hart, Lorenz. *The Complete Lyrics of Lorenz Hart*. Dorothy Hart and Robert Kimball, eds. New York: Knopf, 1986.
- Hart, Lorenz and Richard Rodgers. *Babes in Arms*. Libretto. New York: Rodgers and Hammerstein Organization, 1989.
- Hart, Moss and Ira Gershwin. *Lady in the Dark*. Libretto. *Great Musicals of the American Theatre, Volume Two*. Stanley Richards, ed. Radnor, Pennsylvania: Chilton Book Company, 1976.

- Hawes, Joseph M. and Elizabeth I. Nybakken. "The Study of the American Family." *American Families: A Research Guide and Historical Handbook*. Joseph M. Hawes and Elizabeth I. Nybakken, eds. New York: Greenwood Press, 1991: 3-14
- Hayman, Ronald. "The Neil Simon of Off-Broadway." *London Times*. 4 May 1971. C1.
- Henderson, Archibald. *George Bernard Shaw: Man of the Century*. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1956.
- Hennessey, Rosemary. "Subjects, Knowledges . . . And All The Rest: Speaking for What?" *Who Can Speak? Authority and Critical Identity*. Judith Roof and Robyn Wiegman, eds. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1995: 137-150.
- Hillkey, Judy. *Character is Capital: Success Manuals and Manhood in Gilded Age America*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1997.
- Hinton, Stephen. "The Premiere and After." *Kurt Weill: The Threepenny Opera*, Stephen Hinton, ed. *Cambridge Opera Handbooks*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990: 50-77.
- Hochschild, Jennifer L. *Facing Up to the American Dream: Race, Class, and the Soul of the Nation*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995.
- hooks, bell. *Where We Stand: Class Matters*. New York: Routledge, 2000.
- Horatio Alger Society, The. "Horatio Alger, Jr." <www.horatioalger.com/junior>.
- Horowitz, Joseph. *The Ivory Trade: Piano Competitions and the Business of Music*. Boston: Northwestern University Press, 1990.
- Hytner, Nicholas. "When Your Characters are Speechless, Let 'Em Sing!" *New York Times*. 10 March 2002. Section 2, 1+.
- Johansen, Shawn. *Family Men: Middle-Class Fatherhood in Early Industrializing America*. New York: Routledge, 2001.
- Jones, Gavin. *Strange Talk: The Politics of Dialect Literature in Gilded Age America*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.
- Kahn, E.J., Jr. *The Merry Partners: The Age and Stage of Harrigan and Hart*. New York: Random House, 1955.
- Kakutani, Michiko. *Passion*. CD liner notes. Angel, 1994.

- Kallberg, Jeffrey. *Chopin at the Boundaries: Sex, History, and Musical Genre*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996.
- Kander, John, and Fred Ebb. *Cabaret: The New Cast Recording*. Cast recording. RCA Victor, 1998.
- . *Cabaret*. Vocal score. New York: *The New York Times* Music Corporation (Sunbeam Music Division), 1968.
- Kanter, Rosabeth Moss. "The New Utopian Vision? Bringing Community to the Family." *Journal of Current Social Issues*. Volume 14 (1977): 76-81.
- Kasha, Al and Joel Hirschhorn. *Notes on Broadway: Conversations with the Great Songwriters*. Chicago: Contemporary Books, 1985.
- Kerman, Joseph. *Opera As Drama*. New York: Vintage-Random House, 1956.
- Kibler, M. Alison. *Rank Ladies: Gender and Cultural Hierarchy in American Vaudeville*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1999.
- Knapp, Shoshana Milgram. "Difference and Sameness: Tarchetti's *Fosca*, Scola's *Passion d'Amore*, and Sondheim's *Passion*." *Reading Stephen Sondheim: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Sandor Goodhart, ed. New York: Garland-Taylor & Francis, 2000: 101-119.
- Koestenbaum, Wayn. *The Queen's Throat: Opera, Homosexuality, and the Mystery of Desire*. New York: Poseidon, 1993
- Konas, Gary. "Passion: Not Just Another Simple Love Story." *Stephen Sondheim: A Casebook*. Joanne Gordon, ed. New York: Garland, 1997: 203-222.
- Lahr, John. "Gold Rush." *The New Yorker*. 7 May, 2001: 84-86.
- Lamont, Michèle. *The Dignity of Working Men*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2000.
- "Landmark Symposium: *Cabaret*." *The Dramatists Guild Quarterly*. 19.2. Summer, 1982: 13-28.
- Leach, Edmund. "The Social Anthropology of Marriage and Mating." *Mating and Marriage*. Vernon Reynolds and John Kellett, eds. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1991: 91-110.
- Lees, Gene. *Inventing Champagne: The Worlds of Lerner and Loewe*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990.

- Lemert, Charles. "Mysterious Power of Social Structures." *Understanding Inequality*. Barbara A. Arrighi, ed. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001: 3-11.
- Lerner, Alan Jay. *My Fair Lady*. Libretto. New York: New American Library-Signet, 1956.
- . *The Street Where I Live*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1978.
- Levine, Lawrence. *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America*. Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press, 1989.
- Lewis, Reina. *Gendering Orientalism: Race, Femininity, and Representation*. London: Routledge, 1996.
- Lifson, David S. *The Yiddish Theatre in America*. New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1965.
- Lindemann, Albert S. *The Jew Accused: Three Anti-Semitic Affairs (Dreyfus, Beilis, Frank), 1894-1915*. New York: Cambridge UP, 1991.
- Loewe, Frederick and Alan Jay Lerner. *My Fair Lady*. Vocal score. New York: Chappell, 1956.
- Logan, Joshua. *Josh: My Up and Down, In and Out Life*. New York: Delacorte Press, 1976.
- Macdonald, Dwight. "Masscult and Midcult." *Partisan Review*. Spring, 1960: 203-233.
- . "Masscult and Midcult: II." *Partisan Review*. Fall, 1960: 589-631.
- Macklin, Eleanor. "Nonmarital Heterosexual Cohabitation: An Overview." *Contemporary Families and Alternative Lifestyles: Handbook on Research and Theory*. Eleanor D. Macklin and Roger H. Rubin, eds. Beverly Hills: Sage, 1983: 49-74.
- Mahar, William J. "'Backside Albany' and Early Blackface Minstrelsy: A Contextual Study of America's First Blackface Song." *American Music*. 6.1 (1988): 1-27.
- Martin, Mary. *My Heart Belongs*. Second ed. New York: Quill, 1984.
- Masteroff, Joe and Fred Ebb. *Cabaret*. Libretto. New York: Random House, 1967.
- McBrien, William. *Cole Porter: A Biography*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998.
- McClary, Susan. *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991.

- McDonnell, Evelyn and Kathy Silberger. "Interviews and Text." *Rent*. Jonathan Larson. New York: Rob Weisbach Books-William Morrow and Co, 1997: 1-64.
- McKinney, Kathleen, and Susan Sprecher. "Introduction." *Sexuality in Close Relationships*. Kathleen McKinney and Susan Sprecher, eds. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1991: 1-8.
- McMurrer, Daniel P., and Isabel V. Sawhill. "The Declining Importance of Class. Press Release number 4. "Opportunity in America." *The Urban Institute*. <www.urban.org/oppor/opp.04.html>.
- Melnick, Jeffrey. *Black-Jewish Relations on Trial: Leo Frank and Jim Conley in the New South*. Jackson, MS: UP of Mississippi, 2000.
- Mendes-Flohr, Paul. *German Jews: A Dual Identity*. New Haven (MA): Yale University Press, 1999.
- Meyer, Dick. "Class Warfare, American Style." *CBS News, Eye on Politics*. 9 March 2001. <www.cbsnews.com/now/story/0,1597,277722-412,00.shtml>.
- Michener, James. *Tales of the South Pacific*. New York: Macmillan, 1947.
- Mintz, Steve. "New Rules: Postwar Families (1955-Present). *American Families: A Research Guide and Historical Handbook*. Joseph M. Hawes and Elizabeth I. Nybakken, eds. New York: Greenwood Press, 1991: 183-220.
- Mishel, Lawrence, Jared Bernstein, and John Schmitt. "Press Release for *State of Working America*." 3 September 2000. <www.epinet.org/press%20releases/swa2000.pr.html>.
- Montgomery, James and Joseph McCarthy. *Irene*. Synopsis of the original 1919 libretto. John Degen collection, Tallahassee, FL.
- . *Irene*. Libretto; proposed 1949 revision. Ellwood Anaheim collection, Washington, DC.
- Moody, Richard. *Ned Harrigan: From Corlear's Hook to Herald Square*. Chicago: Nelson-Hill, 1980.
- Mordden, Ethan. *Beautiful Mornin': The Broadway Musical in the 1940s*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- . *Rodgers and Hammerstein*. New York: H.N. Abrams, 1992.

- Morley, Sheridan. "Spread a Little Happiness: West End Musicals." *Contemporary British Theatre*. Theodore Shank, ed. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994.
- Morton, Donald. "Birth of the Cyberqueer." *PMLA*. May 1995: 269-280.
- Most, Andrea. "'We Know We Belong to the Land': The Theatricality of Assimilation in Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Oklahoma!*." *PMLA*, 113.1 (1998): 307-337.
- . "'You've Got To Be Carefully Taught': The Politics of Race in Rodgers and Hammerstein's *South Pacific*." *Theatre Journal* 52.3 (2000): 307-337.
- . "'Big Chief Izzy Horowitz': Theatricality and Jewish Identity in the Wild West." *American Jewish History*. 87.4 (1999): 313-341.
- Mount, Ferdinand. *The Subversive Family: An Alternative History of Love and Marriage*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1982.
- Murray, Robert K. and Roger W. Brucker. *Trapped!: The Story of Floyd Collins*. New York: Putnam and Sons, 1979. Second ed. Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1982.
- New York Clipper, The*. Rev. of Mordecai Lyons. 11 April, 1882. Anonymous. Rpt. in *Edward Harrigan and David Braham: Collected Songs*, Volume 1. *Recent Researches in American Music*, Volume 27. Richard Crawford, ed. Madison (WI): A-R Editions, 1997: 283-284.
- New York Times*. Rev. of Reilly and the 400. Anonymous. Rpt. in *Edward Harrigan and David Braham: Collected Songs*, Volume 2. *Recent Researches in American Music*, Volume 28. Richard Crawford, ed. Madison (WI): A-R Editions, 1997: 149-150.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Birth of Tragedy and The Genealogy of Morals*. Trans. Francis Folffing. New York: Doubleday, 1956.
- Nolan, Frederick. *Lorenz Hart: A Poet on Broadway*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- O'Leary, Elizabeth. *At Beck and Call: The Representation of Domestic Servants in Nineteenth-Century American Painting*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996.
- Pakulski, Jan and Malcolm Waters. *The Death of Class*. London: Sage, 1996.
- Pall, Ellen. "The Long-Running Musical of William Finn's Life." *New York Times Magazine*. 14 June 1998: 38+.

- Parks, Roger and Michael Brewster Folsom. "Introduction." *The New England Mill Village, 1790-1860*. Gary Kulik, Roger Park, Theodore Z. Penn, eds. Cambridge (MA): MIT P, 1982: xxiii-xxxv.
- Patterson, Jerry E. *The First Four Hundred: Mrs. Astor's New York in the Gilded Age*. New York: Rizzoli, 2000.
- Perelman, Michael. *Class Warfare in the Information Age*. New York: St. Martin's, 1997.
- Perrucci, Robert, and Earl Wysong. *The New Class Society*. Lanham (MD): Rowman & Littlefield, 1999.
- Petersen, James R. *The Century of Sex*. New York: Grove Press, 1999.
- Podhoretz, Norman. *My Love Affair With America : The Cautionary Tale of a Cheerful Conservative*. New York: Free Press, 2000.
- Porter, Cole. "Far Away." *Music and Lyrics by Cole Porter, Volume One*. New York: Chappell, 1972: 97-101.
- . "Get Out of Town." *Music and Lyrics by Cole Porter, Volume One*. New York: Chappell, 1972: 102-105.
- . "Most Gentlemen Don't Like Love." *Music and Lyrics by Cole Porter, Volume One*. New York: Chappell, 1972: 106-109.
- . "My Heart Belongs to Daddy." *Music and Lyrics by Cole Porter, Volume One*. New York: Chappell, 1972: 112-114.
- Pressley, Nelson. "'A New Brain:' Surgery in a Musical Vein." *Washington Post*. 20 November, 2001. C1.
- Rauchway, Eric. *The Refuge of Affections: Family and American Reform Politics, 1900-1920*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000.
- Rich, Frank. Rev. of *March of the Falsettos*. *New York Times*. 10 April 1981: C3.
- Riggs, Lynn. *Green Grow the Lilacs*. New York: Samuel French, 1931.
- Rischin, Moses. *The Promised City: New York's Jews, 1870-1914*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962.

- Rodgers, Richard, and Lorenz Hart. *Babes in Arms*. Libretto. New York: Rodgers and Hammerstein Theatre Library, 1978.
- Rodgers, Richard, and Oscar Hammerstein II. *Carousel*. Piano-Vocal score. Dr. Albert Sirmay, ed. New York: Belwin Mills Publishing Corp., 1945.
- . *Oklahoma!*. Piano-Vocal score. New York: Williamson Music, 1943.
- . *South Pacific*. Vocal score. New York: Williamson Music, 1949.
- Rodgers, Richard. *Musical Stages*. New York: Random House, 1975.
- Rosenberg, Bernard and Ernest Harburg. *The Broadway Musical: Collaboration in Commerce and Art*. New York: New York University Press, 1993.
- Rubin, Joan. *The Making of Middlebrow Culture*. Chapel Hill (NC): U of North Carolina Press, 1992.
- Rubin, Louis D. , Jr. "Our Absolutely Deplorable Literary Situation—And Some Thoughts on How to Fix it Good." *Sewanee Review*. 102. 4 (1994): 612-619.
- Rudin, Ken. "Political Junkie." *Washington Post*. 10 August 1001.
<www.washington.com/wp-srv/politics/campaigns/junkie/archive/junkie081001.htm>.
- Russell, Bill and Henry Krieger. *Side Show*. Lyric booklet. Sony, 1997.
- Russo, Vito. *The Celluloid Closet: Homosexuality in the Movies*. Rev. ed. New York: Harper and Row, 1987.
- Sanders, Ronald. *The Days Grow Short: The Life and Music of Kurt Weill*. New York: Holt, Rinehart Winston, 1980.
- Savigliano, Marta E. "From Wallflowers to Femmes Fatales: Tango and the Performance of Passionate Femininity." *The Passion of Music and Dance: Body, Gender, and Sexuality*. William Washabaugh, ed. Oxford: Berg, 1998: 150-173.
- Scanzoni, John. *Designing Families: The Search for Self and Community in the Information Age*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press, 2000.
- Schiff, Ellen. *From Stereotype to Metaphor: The Jew in Contemporary Drama*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1982.
- Schleier, Curt. "Atlanta Jews cringe at musical on infamous lynching." *The Jewish Bulletin Online*. <www.jewishsf.com/bk990108/etaatlanta.htm>.

- Schlossberger, Linda. "Passing Sexuality." *Passing: Identity and Interpretation in Sexuality, Race, and Religion*. Maria Carla Sanchez and Linda Schlossberg, eds. New York: New York University Press, 2001: 125-142.
- Schwartz, Charles. *Cole Porter: A Biography*. New York: The Dial Press, 1977.
- Sealand, Judith. "Families, World War II, and the Baby Boom (1940-1955)." *American Families: A Research Guide and Historical Handbook*. Joseph M. Hawes and Elizabeth I. Nybakken, eds. New York: Greenwood Press, 1991: 157-182.
- Sears, Alan, and Barry D. Adam. "HIV and the State of the Family." *Transgressing Borders: Critical Perspectives on Gender, Household, and Culture*. Suzan Ilcan and Lynne Phillips, eds. Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey, 1998: 19-36.
- Secrest, Meryle. *Stephen Sondheim: A Life*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998.
- Sennett, Richard. "Back to Class Warfare." *New York Times*, 27 December, 1994. A21.
- Steinberg, Stephen. *The Ethnic Myth: Race, Ethnicity, and Class in America*. New York: Atheneum, 1981.
- Seward, Rudy Ray. *The American Family: A Demographic History*. Sage Library of Social Research. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1978.
- Shakespeare, William. *The Merchant of Venice. The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*, The Cambridge Edition Text. William Aldis Wright, ed. New York: Doubleday, 1936: 445-476.
- Shapiro, Edward S. *A Time for Healing: American Jewry Since World War II*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992.
- Shaw, Bernard. *Pygmalion. Bernard Shaw: Complete Plays with Prefaces, Volume 1*. New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1962.
- Shiloah, Amnon. *Jewish Musical Traditions*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992.
- Slide, Anthony. "Sophie Tucker." *The Encyclopedia of Vaudeville*. Westport (CT): Greenwood Press, 1994: 508-513.
- Smith, William L. *Families and Communes: An Examination of Nontraditional Lifestyles*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1999.

- Sondheim, Stephen. *Passion*. Vocal score. Miami: Warner Brothers Publications, 1999.
- Sondheim, Stephen, and James Lapine. *Passion*. Libretto. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1994.
- . *Passion*. Cast recording. Angel, 1994.
- Sontag, Susan. "Fascinating Facism." *Under the Sign of Saturn*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1980: 73-108.
- Spencer, David. Rev. of *Floyd Collins*. *AisleSay*.
<www.aislesay.com/ny-floyd-collins.html>.
- Spewack, Bella, Samuel Spewack, and Cole Porter. *Leave It To Me! Great Musicals of the American Theatre, Volume Two*. Stanley Richards, ed. Radnor (PA): Chilton Book Company, 1976.
- Spigel, Lynn. *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.
- Steinberg, Stephen. *The Ethnic Myth: Race, Ethnicity, and Class in America*. Third ed. Boston: Beacon Press, 2001.
- Steyn, Juliet. "Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist*: Fagin as a Sign." *The Jew in the Text: Modernity and the Construction of Identity*. Linda Nochlin and Tamar Garb, eds. New York: Thames and Hudson, 1996: 42-56.
- Steyn, Mark. "Camping-up Facism." "Theater." *The New Criterion*. 16.9 (1998): 28-33.
- . "Two Cheers for the Middlebrow." *The New Criterion*. 18.6 (2000): 37-41.
- Sumner, William Graham. *What Social Classes Owe Each Other*. Caldwell, ID: Caxton, 1954.
- Takaki, Ronald. *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America*. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1993.
- Taylor, Ronald. *Kurt Weill: Composer in a Divided World*. London: New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991.
- Teachout, Terry. "Battle of the Brows." *Commentary*. 102.4 (1996): 60-62.
- Tierney, Harry and Joseph McCarthy. *Irene*. Vocal selections. New York: Big3 Music Corporation, 1973.

- Turner, Victor. *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society*. Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1974.
- Twain, Mark. *Pudd'nhead Wilson and Those Extraordinary Twins*. Sidney E. Berger, ed. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1980.
- Urhy, Alfred and Jason Robert Brown. *Parade. ShowMusic*. East Haddam (CT): Summer (2000): 40-68.
- Wandersee, Winifred D. "Families Face the Great Depression (1930-1940)." *American Families: A Research Guide and Historical Handbook*. Joseph M. Hawes and Elizabeth I. Nybakken, eds. New York: Greenwood Press, 1991: 125-156.
- Wandor, Michelene. *Post-War British Drama: Looking Back in Gender*. London: Routledge, 2001.
- Warfield, Polly. Rev. of *A New Brain*. *Backstage*. 25 June, 1998.
<www.backstage.com/backstage/a_new_brain>
- Warren, Roz., ed. *Revolutionary Laughter: The World of Women Comics*. Freedom, CA: Crossing Press, 1995.
- Washabaugh, William. "Introduction: Music, Dance, and the Politics of Passion." *The Passion of Music and Dance: Body, Gender, and Sexuality*. William Washabaugh, ed. Oxford: Berg, 1998: 3-29.
- Weill, Kurt and Ira Gershwin. *Lady in the Dark*. Vocal score. New York: Chappell, 1941.
- Weiss, Jessica. *To Have and To Hold: Marriage, the Baby Boom, and Social Change*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.
- "Welcoming Adam Guettel, A True Original." *Happy Talk: The News of the Rodgers and Hammerstein Organization*. 4.2 (1997): <www.rnh.com/news/index.html>.
- White, George S. "The Moral Influence of Manufacturing Establishments." Rpt. in *The New England Mill Village, 1790-1860*. Gary Kulik, Roger Park, Theodore Z. Penn, eds. Cambridge (MA): MIT P, 1982.
- Williams, William H.A. *'Twas Only an Irishman's Dream: The Image of Ireland and the Irish in American Popular Song Lyrics, 1800-1920*. Urbana (IL): University of Illinois Press, 1996.

Willrich, Michael. *Home Slackers: Men, the State and Welfare in Modern America*. *The Journal of American History*. 87.2 (2000).
<www.historycooperative.org/journals/jah/87.2/willrich.html>.

World Theatre. Boston: Little, Brown, 1968.

Wyman, David S. *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust, 1941-1945*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1984.

Young, Iris Marion. "The Ideal of Community and the Politics of Difference." *Feminism/Postmodernism*. Linda S. Nicholson, ed. New York: Routledge, 1990: 56-83

Zandy, Janet. "Introduction." *Calling Home: Working Class Women's Writings*. Janet Zandy, ed. New Brunswick, Rutgers UP, 1990: 1-18.

APPENDIX: SELECTED SONG LYRICS

I. "I've Come Home To Stay," from *Reilly and the 400*

I've nothing but money and time,
Left me by my Daddy and Co.,
It's that sort of thing that keeps up a fling,
Quite jolly, decidedly so.
They say I'm a real heavy swell,
Quite English wherever I go,
This accent I got remarkable well,
While over in London, you know.

Chorus

Oh, but I've come home to stay,
To promenade Broadway;
Mamma's imploring,
Girls adoring,
Don't you go away.
Oh, with London I'm blasé,
It's fog both night and day,
I'm one of you,
Oh, how d'ye do?
Oh, I've come home to stay.

The Briny I've crossed many times,
Distinguished on every boat
Each passenger fair would really declare,
Oh, isn't he brave when afloat.
One day in a Nor'western gale,
The ladies they all went below,
I staggered around, leaned over he rail,
While going to London, you know.

Chorus

I've hobnobbed with princes and dukes,
In fact I was known as their chum,
While walking the Strand, we do it up grand,
And many a bottle of mum.
We've drank at the bar with the girls,
At every music hall show,
That played for the lords and jolly old earls,
Just over in London, you know.

Chorus

You ladies not quite in the swim,
A tip I'll give you on the fads,
Of real English swells the proper old fells,
Who razzle and dazzle the cads.
You beauties with sweet loving eyes,
Who'd marry a titled old beau,
Oh, take my advice, go capture the prize,
Just over in London, you know.

Chorus.

II: "The Highest Judge of All" from *Carousel*

Take me beyond the pearly gates,
Through a beautiful marble hall,
Take me before the highest throne
And let me be judged by the highest Judge of all!

Let the Lord shout and yell,
Let His eyes flash flame,
I promise not to quiver when He calls my name;
Let Him send me to hell,
But before I go,
I feel that I'm entitled to a hell of a show!

Want pink-faced angels on a purple cloud,
Twangin' on their harps till their fingers get red,
Want organ music~let it roll out loud,
Rollin' like a wave, washin' over my head.
Want ev'ry star in heaven
Hangin' in the room,
Shinin' in my eyes
When I hear my doom!

Reckon my sins are good big sins,
And the punishment won't be small;
So take me before the highest throne
And let me be judged by the highest Judge of all.

III. "The Ballad of Floyd Collins," by Andrew B. Jenkins

Oh come all you young people
And listen while I tell;
The fate of Floyd Collins
A lad we all know well;
His face was fair and handsome
His heart was true and brave;
His body now lies sleeping
In a lonely sandstone cave.

How sad, how sad, the story
It fills our eyes with tears;
Its memories too will linger
For many many years;
A broken-hearted father,
Who tried his boy to save;
Will now weep tears of sorrow
At the door of Floyd's cave.

Oh! mother don't you worry
Dear father don't be sad
I'll tell you all my troubles
In an awful dream I've had;
I dreamed that I was a pris'ner
My life I could not save;
I cried, Oh! must I perish
Within this silent cave?

Oh! Floyd, cried his mother
Don't go my son don't go
'Twould leave us broken-hearted
If this should happen so
Tho Floyd did not listen to
Advice his mother gave
So his body now lies sleeping
In a lonely sandstone cave.

His father often warned him
From follies to desist
He told him of the danger
And of the awful risk
But Floyd would not listen
To the oft advice he gave
So his body now lies sleeping
In a lonely sandstone cave

Oh! how the news did travel
Oh! how the news did go
It traveled thru the papers
And over the radio
A rescue party gathered
His life they tried to save
But his body now lies sleeping
In a lonely sandstone cave.

The rescue party labored
They worked both night and day
To move the mighty barrier
That stood within the way
To rescue Floyd Collins
This was their battle cry
We'll never, no we'll never
Let Floyd Collins die.

But on that fatal morning
The sun rose in the sky,
The workers were still busy
We'll save him by and by.
But oh! how sad the ending
His life could not be saved
His body then was sleeping
In a lonely sandstone cave.

Young people oh! take warning
From Floyd Collins fate
Ang get right with your Maker
Before it is too late
It may not be a sand cave
In which we find our tomb
But at the bar of Judgment
We too must meet our doom.

IV. "Cash! Cash! Cash!" from *Mordecai Lyons*

At Macy's grand Emporium I met a charmer fair,
Oh, she was selling neckties
To the swells that gathered there;
I stepped up to the counter,
I said my name is Frash,
Said I, "my pretty little girl,"
She simply hollered cash!

Chorus:

It was cash! cash! cash!
With a smash! smash! smash!
Oh, she hammered on the counter
For number forty-nine;
It was cash! cash! cash!
I thought I had a mash,
But when I went to speak to her,
'Twas cash! cash! cash!

I asked her for a pricelist, then
She handed me a book.
Oh, then I looked it over
For to see if she would look,
She never condescended,
Which made me rather brash,
Said I, "my pretty little girl,"
She simply murmured cash!

Chorus

I paid her for a necktie,
A regular bonton,
I asked if she 'd be so kind
To help me put it on.
She leaned across the counter
In a manner very rash,
I kissed her on her pretty cheek,
She simply hollered cash!

Chorus

Up came a little pretty child,
About the age of nine,
She whispered softly to him:
"Call hither Mister Ryan,"
A monster large Hibernian,
He hit me such a smash;
As I went out the doorway,
Oh, I heard her holler cash!

Chorus.

V. “Mordecai Lyons” from *Mordecai Lyons*

My name it is Lyons, a merchant by trade.
Oh, I’m in the old clothing line.
I’d sell you new trousers and secondhand boots,
I warrant them all superfine.
Suspenders and socks, hats, neckties and bows,
Oh, it’s garters and shoelaces, too;
Oh, take them at cost price,
My gracious, they’re nice,
So beautiful, lovely, and new.

Chorus

Old clothes! I buy and sell,
Walk in the store, I’ll treat you so well;
Now, old clothes! When it’s hard times,
Come buy of Mordecai Lyons.

Alexander, my brother, he keeps a pawn shop.
Where the sports and the gamblers all went.
Mid vetches and diamonds, sealskin overcoats,
At six months, at forty percent;
Three balls is the sign, the number is nine,
You can see his Terms Cash on the wall;
He’s worth I am told
Just one million in gold,
He made on the Black Friday fall.

Chorus

On Sunday I goes, I put on my new clothes,
They cost me a five-dollar note,
Go by the horse car I ride awfully far,
It’s cheaper than wagon or boat;
I do what I can, I’m not a mean man,
I don’t let a beggar pass by,
A penny I give, oh, the poor man must live,
I can’t take it all when I die.

Chorus

VI. “All Dark People” from *Babes in Arms*

Skeet-ski-daddle.

Beedy, weedy, weedy:

Doesn't mean a thing in English,
But it means a lot up Harlem way.

Skeet-ski-daddle.

Beedy, weedy, weedy:

When the tune gets hot and tinglish,
Means a colored person wants to play
At the Old Savoy, that's what they say.

Refrain:

Play that music for me and my sweet—
All dark people is light on their feet.
Pay no mind to a little conceit,
All dark people is light on their feet.
And just the same as flowers got honey
All God's chillun got buck-and-wings.
Paleface babies don't dance on the street,
All dark people are light on their feet.

VITA

Born in Houston, Texas, Don Whittaker graduated from Jersey Village High School in 1980. After several false starts, he received his Bachelor of Arts degree in music theory from Rice University in 1991, and his Master of Arts degree in theatre from Florida State University in 1996. He began acting as musical director for shows around the Houston area in 1984, and has now served as musical director, director, and dramaturg for well over 100 productions. In addition to presenting papers at numerous regional and national conferences, he has published essays on musical theatre practitioners, including Virgil Thomson and Samuel and Bella Spewack. He continues to direct and write, as well as fighting for the acceptance of musicals within the academic community.